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# MARTIN LUTHER

## HIS LIFE AND WORK.

# MARTIN LUTHER

## HIS LIFE AND WORK.

BY

PETER BAYNE, LL.D.

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# Book VIII.

## THE CALL TO GERMANY.

1519—20.

# MARTIN LUTHER.

## Book VIII.

## THE CALL TO GERMANY.

### CHAPTER I.

#### WIDENING THE BREACH WITH ROME.

Doctor Eck and his Leipzig admirers believed, with complacent confidence, that the Wittenberg monk had been disposed of.

> "Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
> The murmur of the world."

Scholastic pedants and theological reactionaries have perhaps as often failed to discern the main currents of tendency as village rustics. Luther for his part, though not in the slightest degree conscious of having been worsted, did not boast of victory over Eck, but looked upon the disputation as having been a waste of time. So he told Spalatin in a letter of some length in which, on regaining the quietude of his Wittenberg cell, he reviewed the affair. His adversaries, he said, had been under the influence of vainglory, and had clamoured rather than argued. He stood by the results of those years of patient and profound research during which he

and his friends, instead of grazing the skin like Eck, had penetrated to the bone.*

The verdict of the Leipzig wiseacres, though endorsed extensively enough by priestly conclaves and University senates, was reversed by the public opinion of Europe. Luther, and not Eck, proved to have spoken the word that the world was listening for. Few cared to note the details of the argumentative conflict; but Europe beheld in Eck the champion of Papal authority and tradition, and in Luther the advocate of freedom and the Bible. More distinctly than before, Luther was made conspicuous as the uplifter of a banner against Rome. European society had for many years been becoming alienated from, and suspicious of, the Roman Church. That vague, half-defined, latent sense of weariness with one order of things and longing for another, which works below the social surface, and is the mightiest of forces in preparing the way for revolution, was in league with Luther. In these circumstances, the counsel of Ahitophel for the Papacy would have been to impose upon its friends a policy of silence.

Luther's experiences in Leipzig had the effect of impelling him into more thorough-going opposition to the Pope than he had yet felt to be among his duties. That stage of transition in his reforming career during which it ceased to be practicable for him to work as a reformer *within* the Roman Church and became one of his fixed ideas that it was his duty to assail Babylon from without, may be placed in those months which

* De Wette, 149.

intervened between his debate with Eck and the publication of his Address to the Nobles and People of Germany. Harsh and sweeping words of condemnation he had previously spoken of the Pope; but they were like sparks from flint, sudden and fleeting, that almost startled himself. On quitting Leipzig in 1519 he had no doubt that Antichrist lurked in the Roman *Curia*, but he had not ceased to hold that it was possible to drag out the canker-worm and save the flower. He was in a mood, however, of exasperation, distrust, and scorn, in relation to everything Papal. His mind was overshadowed by the idea that the paraphernalia of religion, the forms, pomps, ceremonies, officialisms of the Church as an institution, the scenic apparatus and *externals* of ecclesiasticism, had made the truth of God of none effect. An irony grim and sardonic, a sarcasm sharp and bitter, expressed the sad and angry sternness of his mood.

We have this to the life in the letter in which he dedicates to Carlstadt and another of his Wittenberg colleagues the first edition of his commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.* The piece itself bears no date, but as Luther announces, on the 3rd of September, 1519, to Lange, of Erfurth, that the printing of the commentary has been finished on that day, we cannot err in placing the composition of the dedication in close proximity to this point of time.

The reader knows with what passionate reverence Luther regarded the Epistle to the Galatians. Com-

* De Wette, 157.

pared with the truths enshrined in it—the truth of the equal sonship of Gentile and Jew in the spiritual Israel of God—the truth of salvation by grace through faith—all questions of mere ecclesiastical order, mere assignment of ecclesiastical offices, appeared to him infinitely small. Yet the lesson which was dinned into his ears by those who put themselves forward as the men of light and leading for Christendom—the Cajetans at Augsburg and the Ecks at Leipzig—seemed to be, that the one thing grand enough and important enough to claim consideration from Christians was the power and glory of the Papal See. No matter what went on in the background, if only the black reality was veiled behind Papistical ceremony and ecclesiastical show. The subalterns of the hierarchy might revel in a tyranny of their own over the flock; the sacred name of Christ might be invoked to shield the foulest iniquity, to extinguish Christ's very name; the Church might be laid waste by the Church's own authority; and yet, if the external forms of homage to Rome were kept up, the duty expected from observers was nothing but respectful silence.

While leaving the great ones of the theological and ecclesiastical world, therefore, to sacrifice in the groves, or to cut themselves with knives in honour of their Baal, Luther had, he says, betaken himself to a task befitting his insignificance, to the study, to wit, of one of the smallest of authors, whose very name testified to his littleness—Paul,* the Apostle. So far was Paul from

* A play upon the meaning of the Greek word.

being a chief Apostle, or supreme Pontiff, that he calls himself the least of the Apostles; and, further illustrating his littleness, says that he adjudges himself to know nothing but Christ, nor even Christ in all capacities, but Christ crucified, Christ at His lowliest. Of course, St. Paul was not ignorant of those other matters, so great and mighty, and, first of all, of the power of the Roman Church and the majesty of her decrees; only he considered these themes as far above him, in his clownish rudeness and lack of learning. Mighty theologians were alone worthy to treat of themes like these! He, Luther, hoped that his own effort might have some success, seeing that it was restricted to mere nothings, to the power of Christ, for example, which in us withstands the gates of hell, and to the privileges of the heavenly Church, the Church which has its seat neither in Rome nor in Jerusalem, which seeks Christ neither in one locality nor in another, but in all places worships the Father in spirit and in truth. Why should those grand theological personages be moved by trifles like these, lying, as they did, outside their exalted sphere? He might hope, therefore, to go about his work in safety, "confining himself to matters befitting the smallness of his cell."*

Irony of this order is, so far as I know, unique in literature. Perhaps there are tones of it in Isaiah and elsewhere in the Bible. But Luther soon changes his

* "*Res cellulæ meæ parvitate dignas*," obviously the right reading of "*res cellulas mea parvitate dignas*." Such negligent unintelligibilities are more frequent than they ought to be in the De Wette Letters.

tone, and states plainly what is the footing on which he proposes to stand with regard to this grand ecclesiastical power that will not let him alone. He professes to hold the Roman Pontiff and his decretals in high honour—in honour higher than that which he bestows on any other, with the single exception of Christ. He will not set the Vicar above the Vicar's Lord. The Lord's word he will prefer to the Vicar's word, and he will apply the Lord's word as a test and touchstone to the Vicar's words. "I hold the Vicar to be subject to this irrefragable rule of the Apostle's, *Prove all things, hold fast what is good.* From this yoke, I say, I will suffer no man to extract his neck, be it in the name of Mother Church or of Sovereign Church." The necessity of a written rule has, he urges, become more pressing and manifest from the clash of modern opinions, the differences of Councils, the assumption by individuals of arbitrary power to overrule laws, and the wild confusion that has been the result. "It is clearer than light" that many of the decretals are alien to the sense of the Gospel. What then? "The very necessity of the case compels us to have recourse to that most solid Rock of Divine Scripture; and to beware how we pin our faith to those, be they who they may, who, beyond the authority of the Bible, speak, determine, or act."

He then takes and breaks like butterflies on his wheel the Church theories of Cajetan and Silvester. There has, evidently to his mind, been too much seeking for, and depending on, terrestrial guidance in the Church. "As if Christ had lied when He

promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world."

The thought of Cajetan recalls Augsburg and the Papal briefs by which the Cardinal had tried to play the potentate in Germany. Luther's patriotism blazes up the moment the extortion of the hierarchy, and the contempt with which his countrymen are regarded by the Italians, present themselves to his mind. Those fine gentlemen look on the Germans as fools, blockheads, barbarians, beasts; and laugh at the incredible patience with which they allow themselves to be stripped of their skins for the advantage of the Romans. With immense delight he finds that the German princes, assembled in Diet at Augsburg, have fixed upon that distinction between the Roman Church and the Roman *Curia* which, he believes, or at least hopes, will do yeoman's service to the good cause. He, too, cheered by the beautiful example of those lay theologians of the Diet, will distinguish by all possible height, breadth, and length, between the Roman Church and the Roman Curia. In the one he will recognise "the mother and queen of Churches, the spouse of Christ, the daughter of God." In the other he beholds evils beyond expression in words or in tears. "By no means, then, is it lawful to resist the Roman Church: but to resist the Roman Curia would be a greater work of piety for kings, princes, and all men, than to resist the Turks themselves."

## CHAPTER II.

### WORKS AND WORDS OF PEACE AND WAR.

It has been said that the general result of the Leipzig disputation was favourable to the reforming party; but none the less is it true that the reactionary opposition to Luther, of which the first great surge rose and broke in Leipzig in the summer of 1519, did not lapse for a day into a state of suspended animation. He was the mark for a host of assailants, and lived in an atmosphere and element of battle.

Of all these it will be wise to say *Requiescant*. Better for us to note how, amid a "tempest of engagements," he finds time to attend to the minutest matters affecting the happiness of any human being who seeks his aid. Once he is appealed to by a forlorn baker who wants to practise his art in Wittenberg, but is objected to by the town guild of bakers, on the ground that his father once kept a bath. "*Tam religiosa est nobilitas opificum*," comments Luther: "so religiously sensitive is your working man to the dignity of his order!" He passed on the request to Spalatin, to be brought to the ear of Frederick, and we may hope that the applicant baked loaves henceforward in Wittenberg without being

too poignantly affected by the arched eyebrows and patrician sneers of his brother bakers.

It proved, doubtless, a relief, a pleasant diversion, for him under those circumstances, to compose a little treatise of a consolatory nature for the use of his dear master the Prince, who had been ill. He writes it in Latin, the grand old language still coming to his pen most readily, as I infer; but he sends it to Spalatin to be done into German before reaching Frederick's hand. It is one of the most characteristic and admired performances of Luther. Welling up from the heart, it reveals to us how much more congenial it would have been for him, escaping from the burning, blinding sand of the controversial fray, to sit in the shade with such gentle friends as Frederick and Spalatin, and meditate on the goodness of the heavenly Father. There is a simplicity almost childlike, a formal symmetry, primitive and quaint, in the design of the treatise. Luther ranges under seven heads the woes from which the Divine mercy is a shield, and under seven heads the positive benefits and gifts which the Divine bounty confers. The sum of both is Fourteen, which word, in Greek, *Tessaradecas*, he fixes on as the title of the piece. Compared with much in the elaborate literature of consolation which has since been produced, so skilfully modulated to all the tones of sorrow, Luther's performance has a Bunyan-like plainness and bareness. But it was new to Frederick; and as he was ill and heavy-laden, his life of late having been one of much wear and

worry, he appreciated it deeply, and derived much comfort from it and the affection it attested.

In all things it is towards simplicity and the naked essence of things that our Doctor leans. Spalatin—who is as good as a Boswell for us in cross-examining his friend—has been asking him what are the appropriate methods and observances to be followed in public celebration of the passion of Christ.* He takes occasion to deliver an opinion on ceremonies in general as connected with Divine worship. It is to him, he says, in the highest degree distressing to perceive that ceremonies are wont to render people "wonderfully hard, arid, difficult, and flatly inept, so far as the substance and vigour of spiritual affection are concerned. Trusting that all is well because they have muttered over a multitude of words and filled up a space of hours, the worshippers go along securely, rarely stung to repentance, more rarely fervid, most rarely of all penetrating to a knowledge of their own true character."

He counsels variety, and prefers short services to monotonous, humdrum persistence. Into this letter he throws a word or two about Carlstadt which show how vividly present to him at all moments were the interests of his friends. "They tell me that Carlstadt has been writing to you rather wildly. Mind you deal gently with the man. He has been sore tried by the bragging of those Eckian and other wind-bags." This is a Martin

* This is what I infer from the context to have been implied in Spalatin's inquiry *de instituendæ passionis meditatione.*—De Wette, 154.

whom tempests of occupation and hosts of assailants will not drive from his composure, or cause to forget his friends.

On the 3rd of October he writes a memorable letter to Staupitz, from whom he seems to have just received one. Within the hour of writing he has had, he says, a letter from two Bohemian priests of Prague, along with one of the books of John Huss. They exhort him to constancy and patience, declaring that what he preaches is the pure theology. Next he refers to Melanchthon, and, as usual, the theme fires him with enthusiasm, and with self-forgetting pride in his friend he says that Philip's answer to Eck and Company is plainly a miracle. "If such is Christ's pleasure, Philip will be worth many Martins. He will prove the most puissant of all foes to the devil and scholastic theology. He has seen through their trifles, and known the Rock of Christ. Therefore he is puissant and will prevail."

He tells Staupitz that he has been hearing not only from Bohemia, but from the other side of Europe. Letters have come to hand (to whom addressed he does not say) from Gaul, in which Erasmus is stated to have said, "I fear his honesty will be the death of Martin." The Bishop of Brandenburgh, on the other hand, has been evincing unlimited hatred and fury against him. Never, said the Bishop, would his head rest softly on his pillow until he had cast Martin into the fire as—suiting the action to the word—he "threw this faggot."

Having glanced thus freely in his letter at many things, bright and dark, Luther now suddenly pauses,

waives the whole miscellany aside, and throws his heart into a new subject. A gush of tender and warm reminiscence of the far past floods his soul, and looking into Staupitz's eyes, he exclaims, "Enough now of others: what do you want to know about me? You leave me too much to myself. This day, like a child weaned of its mother, I was infinitely sad about you." Then follow words which, to Staupitz who could recall hours of most confidential talk in the seclusion of the cell, hours of self-accusing penitence on Martin's part, might be perfectly luminous; but for us are not without mystery. Those versed in the experiences of a spiritual life will best understand how, almost at one and the same moment, Luther could call on Staupitz to acknowledge the reality of the saving work of Divine grace within him, and also confess his own shortcoming, his lack of faith, his failure to live up to his ideal, and therefore his poignant distress. The words, in barest literalism of translation, I will give; the reader shall interpret them for himself. "I beseech you, praise the Lord in me, sinner as I am. I hate this worst of lives. I think with horror of death. I am void of faith. Other gifts abound; but Christ knows how thoroughly I do *not* desire them unless I can be doing His service."*

But he is not going to forget that a letter is a

* *Obsecro te, Dominum laudes in me etiam peccatore: vitam odi pessimam, mortem horreo, et fide vacuus sum, aliis donis plenus, quæ scit Christus quam non desiderem, nisi ei serviam.*—De Wette, 162.

letter, or to lose the lightness of his touch in the solemnity of the confessional. He recurs to everyday topics. The Franciscans of his neighbourhood, he tells Staupitz, have been holding a chapter to dispute on the *stigmata* of Saint Francis and the glory of their Order. Such has been their felicity, that those who formerly venerated the Saint and respected the Order begin now to have doubts as to the reality of the *stigmata* of the former and as to the flourishing condition of the latter. It was ill-will, he hints, to himself that had set them disputing, a rumour having got abroad that he had preached against the *stigmata*. Pity, he says, that they should make themselves ridiculous for nothing!

He cannot persist, however, in his effort to be cheerful. The thought of estrangement between himself and his beloved master forces itself back. "Last night," he cries, "I had a dream of you. You made as if you would depart from me, and I wept and grieved most bitterly. But you held out your hand to me, and bade me be still, for you would return to me. And sure enough the dream has been fulfilled this day. But now farewell, and pray for me the most wretched of men (*me miserrimo*)."

Some serious estrangement had unquestionably taken place between the teacher and the disciple. The vehemence of Luther, his vituperative fierceness, his prompt pugnacity, his apparent determination to go all lengths, and to be startled back by no mutterings of revolutionary storm, had filled Staupitz with alarm. Nor

was the good Vicar alone in these sentiments. Very far from it. Frederick, Spalatin, Melanchthon, found something questionable in Martin's impetuosity and harshness. No wise and gentle-minded man could view with approbation the unbridled fury that made him give Eck the lie direct. His friends all round, as he often hints, lecture him on his turbulence. His own feeling on the point is not uniform. As we read and re-read his letters, we observe that his mood varies, but varies always in a manner illustrating the sincerity of his nature, the genuineness and the prophet-like fervour and intensity of his inspiration, and the noble modesty which underlies his frank and undisguised consciousness of mental power. At times he is contrite. So many good people must have reason in their censures. Has he not himself prescribed to others the duty of combining tenderness of consideration for weak or erring souls with peremptory insistence upon truth? At such moments he is ready to assign himself but a rough and preparatory function in the cause of Christ. He will be the pioneer who fells the trees and breaks the clods, and opens the way for Philip. His accomplished and moderate successor will lay out the plan of the new garden of the Lord, and bring flower and fruit to perfection. Thus he hangs his head in unaffected self-accusings. But there are times—nor are they unfrequent—when, uttering the deepest conviction of his soul, he betrays another mood and employs a different language. A sense of the infinite importance of the truth fires his imagination; the duty laid upon

him to offer to all the world the pure and vitalising waters of salvation, in which his own soul has washed and been made clean, urges him with imperious force; the conviction that the Gospel is being made of none effect by those who arrogate to themselves the privileges and powers of the Church of Christ agitates him; and he cries out not only "Woe is me if I hold my peace!" but "Woe is me if I do not speak in tones of thunder!" He will not sheathe the sword of Christ in softness of speech. He bids his friends remember that truth searches, divides, destroys, offends, admits no truce with falsehood, no compromise with deadly error. As the prophetic heat glows within him he alleges more and more loudly that he does well to be angry; that moderation is in some cases wicked; that, whatever else may be laid to his charge, he trusts and prays that he will never be guilty of being tame, reserved, or lukewarm in proclaiming the truth and in defying and denouncing its adversaries. The defiant and leonine Luther, the Luther who, like the horse in Job, scents the battle from afar and the snorting of whose nostrils is terrible, always triumphs over the meek and lamblike Luther. How much prettier had it been otherwise! Yes; and where then had been the Reformation?

## CHAPTER III.

### DISTINGUISHED CORRESPONDENTS.

We saw that the Augsburg session of the Imperial Diet, in 1518, was memorable in relation to European history, not from its infinite talk and intrigue on the approaching election to the Imperial throne, but because it had furnished an opportunity to Frederick of Saxony for getting Luther's citation to Rome to take his trial for heresy so far modified as to sanction his being tried in Germany. Maximilian, the reigning Emperor, had set his heart on being succeeded by his grandson, Charles, and could not venture to disoblige the most influential of the Electors. From a motive directly the reverse of Maximilian's, to wit, in order to frustrate the election of Charles, Pope Leo had also been desirous of ingratiating himself with Frederick. The grand aim of Leo, as an Italian prince, was to maintain a balance of power among the princes of Italy; and since Charles, in virtue of his Neapolitan sovereignty, was an Italian prince as well as King of Spain and the Indies, Leo felt that the addition of the Imperial dignity would give him a perilous ascendancy. The Pope was studiously civil, therefore, to Frederick, and had for some time been dangling before his eyes the Golden Rosé, a bauble

made precious to simple souls by Papal consecration, and bestowed at stated intervals upon such prominent personages as the Pope might delight to honour. Frederick, accordingly, between an Emperor all smiles on this hand and a compliant Pope on that, had no difficulty in carrying his point in favour of Luther.

The year 1519 was not quite a month old when all the anxieties and schemings of weak, well-meaning Maximilian came to an end. But the schemings of other people, instead of being terminated by his death, went on with augmented vivacity. Seldom in the history of Europe has there been a period of greater diplomatic activity than that which intervened between the death of Maximilian in January and the Imperial election in June, 1519. As Maximilian and his concerns melt like a dissolving view from the historical horizon, a number of new figures, conspicuous among them a group of young kings, dawn into a brightness of visibility that has not yet quite faded away. Charles, the likeliest candidate for the vacant throne, was but a stripling—born at Ghent in the first year of the century. His most formidable antagonist, Francis, the young King of the French, ambitious, adventurous, and vain, was destined to be Charles's rival during many a year of fitful sunshine and of frequently recurrent storm. Henry of England, Eighth of the name, also young, but without the modesty becoming young men, effulgent in fields of gold and the like, where he and Francis posed and swaggered to the admiration of innocent mankind, made show of entering the lists as a

candidate, but had not the ghost of a chance. The decision lay with Frederick. The guardian of Luther might himself have ascended the Imperial throne, such was the confidence reposed in him by his brother electors; but he too well knew the inadequacy of his Saxon resources for coping with Imperial requirements to accept the proffered honour. He in effect it was, however, who put the sceptre into the hand of Charles. Horse-loads of treasure were tendered him in reward for his choice, but he waived it all aside, sternly forbidding even his retinue to accept a ducat. On the 28th of June, at the Diet of Frankfort, Charles was elected Emperor. History knows him as Charles V., and Robertson has made him the subject of one of the masterpieces of historical literature.

On the 15th of January, 1520, Luther addressed to the new Kaiser a letter. It is not intrinsically memorable, but deserves some notice as marking the point when the man who played the most important part in the spiritual history of the sixteenth century first made appeal to the man who is most conspicuous in its secular and military annals.

Beginning with conventional expressions of unlimited self-depreciation, he soon rises to his natural style. Insignificant, he says, as he personally may be, his cause has entry into the Court of Heaven, and cannot be deemed unworthy to be brought before any earthly potentate. He had issued, he proceeds, certain little books, which had brought upon him a tempest of hatred and anger. He had thought himself safe for two

reasons: first, because, though earnestly desiring to lie hid in his corner, he had been forced by the incitements and wiles of others to write; and, secondly, because the testimony of his conscience, and the opinion of the best judges, had been his warrant that his sole object was to spread abroad Christian truth, divested of superstitious opinions. Nearly three years had now gone by, during which he had been exposed to endless fury, contumely, danger. Vainly had he asked pardon, offered to be silent, proposed terms of peace, entreated to be taught a more excellent way. One fate alone was prepared for him—to be extinguished along with the Gospel he taught.

Having tried all other expedients to no profit, he had at length bethought him of following the example of Athanasius and invoking the Imperial majesty; if perchance, by its means, Christ might help His own cause. Bending as a suppliant before the Most Serene Charles, he entreats him to take under his protection, not Luther, but the cause of truth, for the sake of which alone he has been appointed to bear the Imperial sword. Luther asks to be shielded no longer than until he has either vanquished, or has been vanquished, in argument. "I would not be defended if I am found to be impious and heretical. One thing I ask—that neither truth nor falsehood may be condemned unheard and unrefuted." To this letter Charles is not known to have vouchsafed any answer whatever. He was, be it remembered, not yet twenty-one, and his hands were full.

It is pleasant to note that Luther has occasion about this time to chronicle a piece of genuine friendliness on the part of Erasmus. The sovereign of letters has been writing to the high and mighty Cardinal-Archbishop Albert in his favour. The letter had not got into print, but Luther refers to it in terms which suggest that he had seen it. Some people, he says, have been handing about a thrice excellent letter of Erasmus to the Prince-Archbishop Albert, in which a cordial solicitude is manifested on behalf of Luther. Erasmus defends him with superlative skill, yet with a dexterity so fine—so characteristic of the genius of the man—that you might think he was after nothing in the world less than a purposed vindication of him.* Had Erasmus wanted to ingratiate himself with Albert he would have adopted a very different tone of allusion to Luther.

Reverting to the letter to the Emperor Charles, we may associate with it two others written by Luther about the same time. They, as well as the Imperial letter, may be described as letters of conciliation; and it is more than probable that he was influenced to write them by Frederick, who was perpetually intent upon ending the disturbance by quiet methods.† The recipients of the letters in question were none others than Archbishop Albert and the Bishop of Merseburg. The first had been the patron of Tetzell; the second had exerted himself with spasmodic vehemence

* *Egregie me tutatur, ita tamen ut nihil minus quam me tutari videatur, sicut solet pro dexteritate suâ.*— De Wette, 193.

† De Wette, 194.

to thwart Luther in the matter of the Leipzig disputation; but Frederick anxiously hoped, or fondly believed, that they were not hostile to Luther's main contention; and Luther himself had not yet made up his mind that they could not be won over to the party of reformation. At all events he consented to address them.

In his letter to Albert he makes not the most distant allusion to Tetzell or Indulgences. His triumph in that instance had been so complete that the day had gone by when it was necessary to strike new blows at the traffic in pardons for sin. Luther tacitly assumes that what he had done in the Tetzell business entitled him to the gratitude and confidence of the Prince-Archbishop. He speaks as one who has been, and means to be, loyal and dutiful, and part of whose duty it is to disabuse, to the best of his power, the mind of Albert of any false and mischievous impressions it may have derived respecting him from blundering rumour or from lying malice. One thing he desires with touching earnestness — a simple thing, the most reasonable thing in the world, indispensable, too, if any real and sympathetic understanding is to be attained to between the men, and yet unspeakably difficult—that Albert will *read* what he, Luther, has written. Is it not pathetic? Passionately convinced that the truth he proclaims is God's medicine for the dying soul of man—fired by the thought that if Albert, and the like of Albert, would but awake from their somnolent apathy, or pause amid their puerile frivolities, and once give ear to the glad tidings of the grace of God, they could not but repent

and be healed—he implores the Cardinal to give him a hearing. All who have candidly read his writings without perversely insinuating into them a sense not their own, have, he says, approved of them. He is sure that if his real position were ascertained it would be found to involve no heresy.

To the Bishop of Merseburg he writes to the same effect, partly even in the same terms; but lays perhaps more stress upon the sincerity of his belief that his doctrine is the very truth of God, and upon the necessity laid on him to preach it. With the Bishop, as with the Archbishop, he pathetically pleads for a first-hand reading of his books. On two delicate questions, the giving of the cup to the laity, and the nature of the Papal authority, he hints that his deviation from the received opinion turns upon names rather than upon things.

The letters were forwarded to Spalatin, and Spalatin sent them on to their respective destinations. Within the month both were answered; and, to a considerable extent, the answers resembled each other. The Archbishop ingenuously confesses that he has not read, that he has, in fact, hardly looked at, Luther's books. He does not deny that much may be in a state to admit of improvement; but lauds gentle methods, deprecates disputation about free-will and the like, as leading to strife and a capricious variety of opinion, and thinks that it will uselessly unsettle the common people to suggest innovations in the way of dispensing the sacrament. The Bishop speaks rather more sharply. He has

evidently read some, at least, of Luther's books, for he frankly avows his inability to see what good these "hastily thrown off and violent" performances can do. He advises Luther to leave off "scolding and scorning, *schelten und schmähen,* and take to publishing books that will edify."*

* Walch, XV.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CARLSTADT AND MELANCHTHON—THE AGITATION DEEPENING—LAURENTIUS VALLA.

In these same weeks—of February, 1520—we find Spalatin urging Luther, in the interest of Frederick, who dearly prizes his devotional books, and wishes he would write nothing else, to push on with his exegetical lectures and get ready his commentaries on the Psalms and the Gospel of St. Matthew. He replies by a reference to the overwhelming flood of his occupations. "True," he says, "I am quick of hand and of ready memory. What I write flows from me without effort. Yet I cannot possibly overtake what I have to do. How men who are slower than I am can manage is to me a mystery." Do not the words bring us curiously near the Doctor, as he writes in his cell in the chilly sunlight of Wittenberg, on that February day, four hundred years ago?

Ever since the Leipzig disputation Eck has been busying himself with opposition to Luther. He flits away to Rome and rouses the populace of the city into riotous protest against the listless indifference with which their rulers seem to regard the revolt of Germany from the Holy See. He exerts himself at Ingoldstadt to have Luther's books publicly burnt, but even here, the

seat of his fame, he was baffled when on the point of success, and *iratus discessit*, chuckles Martin—marched off in a rage. There is another way, indirect but not less real or annoying, in which Luther suffers from Eck. Carlstadt takes up the cudgels in his defence, and acquits himself so discreditably that Luther cannot but feel that the performance injures both himself and the cause. On the title page, for example, of one of Carlstadt's controversial pieces, appears an inscription beginning, "Against that most brutal ass," etc. The "crude heat of mind" thus betrayed distresses Luther, and he asks Spalatin to stop Carlstadt if he can. But he adds, with humorous perception, that it may prove a ticklish business. Carlstadt bristles up if Luther hints a fault or hesitates dislike, and Spalatin is admonished not to let him know that Luther has been invoking aid against him. For Carlstadt is *homo infirmatus suspicionibus*, a man who cannot walk straight or stably, but gropes about moonstruck by suspicions. A fine, graphic touch in pen-portraiture! In fact, Carlstadt gives promise of being an affliction to his friends. A man peppery, impulsive, unstable; a lover of extremes; with tendencies to affectation and extravagance allying him to our superfine nineteenth century rather than to the sixteenth. Of quick parts, of great activity, but no weight; egotistically incapable of self-measurement, petulantly irritated at seeing other men take precedence of him. Carlstadt, not Martin Luther—this, in his inmost heart, he tried to believe—ought to head processions, whether entering Leipzig or leading

mankind in general. He has had one fall; and bids fair, on Lord Beaconsfield's principle that adventures are to the adventurous, to have ups and downs in the course of his life.

But if Carlstadt is teasing and conceited, Martin finds relief in Melanchthon. It is a fancy, yet something also of a fact, that in these two men he had reflections, and to some extent monitory reflections, of himself. The irascibility, the dogmatism, the vituperative fierceness, the tendency to call opponents asses and other undignified beasts, which were Luther's own besetting sins, were seen in glaring exaggeration in Carlstadt. In Melanchthon, on the other hand, he beheld as firm a faith as his own, but it glowed through a beautiful irradiation of reason, gentleness, and sympathy. Carlstadt was Luther's deterrent example. Melanchthon was his realised ideal.

It is delightful to observe how, amid his tumult of war and work, he ceases not to exercise a paternal guardianship over Philip. A great scheme is now beginning to loom in the distance for the benefit and behoof of the boylike scholar and theologian—no less than to get him a wife! Luther owns to Spalatin that he has expressed the wish that Philip should be mated, but is not without fear that it will be difficult to find a woman suited to his scholarly ways. Shrewd Martin has noted that mishap in wedlock follows great geniuses almost like a fate.

But the agitation of his mind in the strife on which he has embarked with the Papacy is all this time

deepening. The hopes—not very confident—in which he may have indulged when writing to Albert of Magdeburg, and to the Bishop of Merseburg, give place to darker anticipations. He foresees a "new and great conflagration," but sternly hails it as indispensable. "Who can resist the counsel of God?" He warns Spalatin against interfering. "Leave the affair, I beg, to go according to its own impelling forces; God alone is in the business. We are caught up and hurried along. We are driven rather than drive."* A few days later, still in the month of February, he writes in the same spirit, but with specific indication of terrible thoughts that have been dawning on him. In one of the latest Episcopal attacks—the inhibition which the Bishop of Meissen thought fit to issue—he detects what hitherto he has not expressly laid to the charge of Rome or her bishops, to wit, false doctrine of a deadly kind. "This," he wrote, "is blasphemy." The Bishop, he says, propounds heresy that cuts into the heart of the Gospel of Christ. If this be indeed so—if the Papal authorities actually stick to this—he will make no more offers of peace to them. "I will not suffer damned error to be pronounced in lieu of the Gospel of God even by the universal angel choirs of heaven, how much less then by the idols of one little earthly Church."† In another tremendous letter, written about the same time, he abandons wholly the apologetic tone he has previously adopted, and assumes that of grave rebuke. It is not he whom those people are attacking, it is the truth

* De Wette, 221. † De Wette, 202.

of God, "and do you bid me not even bark against such wolves?" He will accept exile—he will endure any hardship—but he will not be silent. "I adjure you," he cries, "if your heart is right in regard to the Gospel, think not that it can be maintained without tumult, scandal, sedition. Out of a sword you will not make a feather, out of war you will not make peace. The Word of God is a sword, it is war, it is ruin, it is scandal, it is loss, it is poison, it is (as Amos saith) as a bear in the way, a leopard in the wood, and thus it meets the sons of Ephraim." After all, however, he as good as owns that he has been too vehement; "I do not deny that I am more vehement than I should be," adding naïvely, "and since they know this, they ought not to irritate the dog."*

We are still in February, 1520—one of the most critical months of his life—when he makes an announcement which assists us more, perhaps, than any other of his utterances to date with precision his rupture with the Papacy. "I have in my hands," he says, "by the civility of Dominic Schleusner, Laurentius Valla's refutation of the Donation of Constantine, edited by Hutten. *Deus bone!* what obfuscation or what iniquity on the part of the Romans! And—a thing to be wondered at in the judgment of God—that the falsification should have remained in force for so many ages, that among the decretals should have been recorded lies so foul, crass, and impudent! And —to let no possible monster of monstrosity be wanting

* De Wette, 203.

—that they should have taken the place of articles of faith! So agonised am I, that I have almost ceased to doubt that the Pope is the very Antichrist whom the world, in its common opinion, looks for: so perfectly do all things which he lives, does, speaks, and determines, suit the character." *

It is possible — especially in familiar and confidential correspondence—for the same words to be used on different occasions with intensely different significance. The suggestion, we recollect, that the Pope was Antichrist flashed across Luther's brain long since, and was mentioned in a letter to Spalatin. But then it was merely one of those flickering streamers of suggestion that glitter for a moment; passing meteors on the firmament of the mind, that vanish utterly, and leave the stellar lights of belief steadfast as of old. Luther now writes in deliberate and deadliest earnest; and a heart-searching pang shudders through him as he writes. *Angor*, I am agonised. I have a sense of strangling nightmare anguish, as the haggard conviction wrestles me down.

It will be war, then, between him and the Papacy, war to the knife. Two days after writing this letter to Spalatin, he announces to the same correspondent that Eck has gone to Rome to raise against him all the powers of the abyss—*impetraturus contra me abyssos abyssorum*.

On the 29th of February he has received the answer of the Bishop of Merseburg, and touches on it slightly to

* De Wette, 204.

Spalatin. It does not, on the whole, displease him. All very well, he thinks, for the Bishop, in his dignified quietude and safety, to tell him not to gird at the Roman Pontiff. "As if, to be sure, it were a pleasant thing for me to be tossed with tempests, and as if I should not like better to lead my life in peace!" Then he glances off in the direction of the Prince-Archbishop, whose answer to his letter has not yet reached him. Albert, it seems, is beginning to launch out audaciously, and to be almost tyrannical in his energy. On one point, however, Luther cordially approves of his proceedings. He has been taking measures to curtail beggary; primarily, as it would seem, the beggary associated with monasticism. On that matter Luther delivers an opinion which anticipates in a remarkable manner the result of maturest thought and ripest experience in succeeding times. "For my part, so far as in me is, I should vehemently like to see this whole system of mendicity done away with. This, indeed, is one of those articles in which Eck makes me out to be, and boastfully proclaims me, a heretic. I detest this foulest of all means of obtaining a livelihood, and should prefer this day to learn a trade (*artificium*) by which I might keep myself, than to live so any longer; and in this heresy I shall die, let Eck say what he likes." Among the healthy and authoritative instincts that fortify this man, an instinct of invincible sympathy with industry is not the least. Frank, full, outspoken hostility to nonsense, including sentimental nonsense, has been half the battle of Protestantism.

Somewhat doubtfully there falls within this month a letter to Spalatin which informs us that, while prosecuting under the guidance of Laurentius Valla his inquiry into the origin of Roman authority, he has been proceeding also with his researches into the so-called heresies of Huss. And the result has been to him in this case as startling and lamentable as in that. Suddenly the man whom he had classed among the heretics and pests of the world becomes exalted for him to a place among the martyrs standing round the throne of God. He warns Spalatin once more against trusting too fondly to peaceful methods. Christ, he says, fought the fight to the shedding of His own blood, and so, after Him, have the martyrs contended. "Without knowing it," he cries, "I have taught and held all the views of John Huss. So has John Staupitz. In a word, we are all unconscious Hussites. And, to crown the matter, Paul and Augustine are Hussites to the letter." The effect on him personally is that same shuddering bewilderment which he experienced when the horror of Papal fraud and the express identification of Antichrist broke upon him. "I know not, for stupor, what to think, when I see the judgments of God so terrible among men that Gospel truth, publicly burnt a hundred years ago, is held for damned."

It is unnecessary to accumulate details or to multiply quotations. The grand fact, which every reader must be able ere now to realise with more or less vividness for himself, is that the whole atmosphere around

Martin Luther is, in these months, becoming electric. His friends apprehend plots; nay, preternatural plots. We hear of a certain mysterious doctor of medicine, who possesses magical powers; for the age of science is not yet, and even the shrewdest intelligences are influenced by fancies that would not now delude a child. The magical powers are to be used against Luther. The ancient association between sorcery and medicine had not yet been broken, and this dark *medicus* was said to have the power of making himself invisible and thus approaching a detested heretic to shed poison into his cup or the like.* It does not appear that Luther, constitutionally dauntless, took any precautions to shield himself from this species of danger; but such was his suspicion of the wiles of Rome that we find him, in the course of the summer, actually charging Spalatin to see to it that Frederick should not be removed by poison.

Meanwhile the crowd of his assailants grows in number, and his fervour against the Papacy becomes hotter in proportion to the fury of its defenders. Warnings, remonstrances, rebukes, are addressed to him on this hand and on that, but he rebukes his rebukers, and boldly asserts that the occasion is one on which tempest and overturning are in place. "It is no new thing, no thing of to-day, if the world is perturbed by the Word of God. Herod and all Jerusalem with him were troubled by the mere hearing that Christ had been born: why should not the earth be moved

* De Wette, 221.

and the sun be darkened when the tidings are that Christ is dead?"

At last, when the midsummer month has crossed the threshold and one would like to think of roses, we learn that he has been engaged upon a new work of a polemical nature, and that it will shortly appear in the form of an address to the Emperor Charles and the nobles and people of Germany, on the tyranny and wickedness of the Roman Curia. This item of intelligence communicated to Spalatin early in June, 1520, with several others that need not detain us, shows that the heat long seething in the mountain's breast has rent its way, and that the fire-volleying has begun.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TRUMPET-CALL TO GERMANY.

The publication, in the summer of 1520, of Luther's Address to the Emperor, Nobles, and People of Germany must be characterised as an event; nay, as one of the most memorable events in the modern history of Europe. Weighed in the scales of reason, its importance would overbalance that of many a famous battle—Fontenoy, Leuthen, Austerlitz, or Waterloo. Images of battle, in fact, crowd upon the mind as we contemplate this astonishing performance. The impression it makes is like that of the thunder and flash of a thousand great guns. Or the words of Luther may be figured as a host, pouring from the woods and plains of Germany, and hurling back across the Alps the invading legions of Rome. Never did the great *Heerde*, the huge, half-disciplined herd or host of German warriors, descend upon Italy with more impetuous fury than this torrent of fiery language on the amazed and panic-stricken janissaries of Rome. In the tumultuary hosts of old Germany you would in vain have looked for the regular movements of the parade ground. Their power lay in their momentum, in the fierce enthusiasm with which they were imbued, in the shock of their

onward rush. So it is with this Address of Luther's. Liable to countless exceptions of a literary nature, coarse, violent, irregular, laughing to scorn the requirements of academic propriety, it is consummately adapted to achieve the purpose for which it was designed—the repulse and rejection of Italian influence from Germany. All the Teuton rage against Rome, pent-up for centuries, is here set free. The wail of disappointed, disenchanted peoples swells suddenly into a roar like that of the autumn blasts. It is not an amiable performance. Hurricanes are not amiable things. But hurricane-work can be done only by hurricanes. The question is, whether the hurricane is wanted. All that was unreasonable, unsympathetic, impatient, choleric, one-sided, coarse, in Luther, as well as the corresponding elements in Protestantism, are typified, represented, prefigured, in this tempest of words.

"The time for holding one's peace is past, and the time to speak has come," says Luther, in the few sentences of dedication to his friend Amsdorff, with which he prefaces the Address. The clergy are sunk in slumberous unconcern; it is to the laity he makes his appeal. He will be thought presumptuous, arrogant; he, an insignificant monk, tutoring the Kaiser and the nobles of Germany. He will be told that he is a fool. So be it! He will be court fool in the halls of the German nobles; only he will speak, as court fools have been known to do, truth and sense of which wiser men decline to be the spokesmen. Fool as he may be, he is a sworn Doctor of Holy Writ, and will prove his fidelity

to his oath. "Be God my help to forget my own honour and to remember His alone!"

Turning from the dedication to the Address itself, we find that in the outset he is comparatively calm. He restrains his fire, though you feel that his heart is burning within him. The universal sense of calamity and depression, heavy upon all lands, heaviest of all upon Germany, is, he says, moving everyone to cry aloud to Heaven. A noble youth* has been given them for Kaiser, and the fact is as a dayspring of hope to many hearts. But the imperative condition of improvement is that trust be placed in God alone. To the absence of this trust he imputes the failures of other times. Because they leant on an arm of flesh were the German Kaisers, Frederick the First and Frederick the Second, flung miserably beneath the feet of the Popes. Because Germany, France, and Venice trusted in themselves, they were worsted by that blood-sucker, Pope Julius the Second. The greater the material force, the more ruinous is the disaster, unless all be done in humility and the fear of God.

*The Ramparts of the Papacy.*

The powers of Rome, he proceeds, have entrenched themselves behind three rampart-walls. Against all attack, these are their defence. From behind these they sally forth to dominate and desolate Christendom. To lay these three in the dust is the condition of possible reform.

* *Ein junges edles Blut*, a young, noble blood; the phrase, expressive and touching in German, has no counterpart in English.

The first is the claim of the Pope and his priestly myrmidons to a superiority over the body of Christians —*the sacredness of a priestly class.* The second is the claim of the Pope to interpret Scripture and rule in its name—*Papal infallibility.* The third is the claim of the Pope to initiate all proceedings with a view to reform—*sole Papal right to call a General Council.*

By the help of God Martin will cast down these three walls of Babylon.

First, the inviolable sacredness of the clerical and priestly class—let a word be spoken on that! It has been feigned that Pope, Bishops, Priests, Convent-people, constitute a Spiritual Estate ; Princes, Gentlemen, Mechanics, Agriculturists, a Worldly Estate. Sheer human invention, putting a false gloss upon God's truth! All Christians are a Spiritual Estate. There is no difference between them but that of office. One body, many members. So St. Paul teaches the Corinthians. One baptism, one promise of salvation, one faith, make of Christians one spiritual people. A royal priesthood, a priestly kingship, are assigned by St. Peter to all Christians alike. Ten brethren, all of the blood royal, elect one to exercise sovereignty—that is the sole tenable basis of Popehood. A little company of Christians are cast upon a desolate island and forced to settle there. No Bishop, no Priest, is among them. Let them choose one of their number, and set him apart to be Bishop and Priest. He will have as much power, to the last iota, to preach, to pronounce absolution, to baptise, to dispense the Eucharist, as could be

given him by all the Popes and Bishops that ever breathed. In this way, in early Christian ages, were Bishops and Priests chosen by the people and sanctioned by other Bishops, without the fuss and sumptuosity now in vogue. Such Bishops were Augustine, Ambrose, Cyprian. This, of course, does not imply that every man may give himself out as Priest or Bishop. The right is common—the Christian people are to say who shall exercise the right. But the indelibility of the priestly character is a mere fancy. And since the Christian layman, from Kaiser to cobbler, is also a member of Christ's body, his shoe-making or law-making function is consecrated, and he is bound to perform his duties for the benefit alike of priest and people. As the Christian shoe-maker is bound to provide sound shoes for the priest, so the Christian king or magistrate is bound, if the priest is a thief or a robber, to punish him. Privilege of clergy — a whole land placed under interdict because a priest has been killed— must take itself off. The life of a Christian ploughman is as sacred as the life of a Priest or Bishop.

The next Popish rampart is the usurped right to interpret Scripture with sole and infallible authority. No shadow of evidence for such a pretension can be derived from Scripture. True, the keys are committed to St. Peter and to the rest of the Apostles. But the power of the keys has reference to discipline alone, not to the laying down of truth. St. Peter could unquestionably err, since St. Paul justly rebuked him. No Christian can divest himself of responsibility, and place

his conscience in the hand of Priest or Pontiff. Everyone is to quit himself like a man—pressing towards truth and fighting down error. An honest reader, consulting his Bible, can be impeached by no power below the sun.

If the first two walls are prostrate, the third cannot long be maintained. A Pope who is a wrong-doer cannot be called to account unless the power of calling a Council can be exercised otherwise than by the Roman See. The Apostolic Council, mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, was called, not by St. Peter, but by the Apostles and Elders generally. The most distinguished of all Councils, the Council of Nice, was called by the Emperor Constantine, and was not even sanctioned by the Bishop of Rome. To call the Church together, for judgment or for advice, is one of the universal rights of Christians. It belongs, in specific cases, to him who is most vividly alive to the evils which the Council is required to deal with. It may fitly be exercised by the Prince or Magistrate.

### *Work for a Council.*

The sheltering walls being thus laid low—the ground being cleared for a General Council—what is the work that it ought to undertake? It ought to break up and recast, or utterly destroy, that disgraceful, devilish *régime* of the Romans which lies hard upon German souls. It will have to take in hand, first of all, that ghastly pomp and haughtiness by which he who calls himself Vicar of Christ and successor of St.

Peter has become more worldly than the world itself. His crown must, forsooth, be threefold, while a single crown contents the highest secular monarchs. It will have to curtail, in the second place, the number of Cardinals, fattening at Rome on the spoils of Christian nations. The Pope can now make them thirty or forty in a batch, and bestow upon them the best livings in Germany. One gets the fine Monkberg at Bamberg, another the bishopric of Wurtzburg, one this, one that, till churches stand empty and towns are waste; and all through the activity of Christ's representative and the shepherd of Christ's sheep! The blockheads of Germany have got to put up with this as they best can. It will have to overhaul, in the third place, the Papal Court generally, insisting upon sweeping measures of retrenchment. Officials by the thousand—officials almost without number—consume the immense income which is drawn on various pretexts from Germany. Ages ago the German Emperor and Princes granted the Pope the *annates*, that is to say, one half of the first year's income of all vacated livings. Sums were perpetually being demanded under colour of defending Christendom against the Turks. More was obtained by the sale of Indulgences. Thus were the simple Germans treated as born fools. Not a stiver went to harm the Turks—all was poured into the bag at Rome, the bag that has no bottom. They lied, they cheated; they made stipulations of which they never thought of observing one iota. And all was done in the sacred

names of Christ and of St. Peter! From ravening wolves like these, the Princes and Bishops of Germany were bound to preserve the people. The *annates*, having been scandalously abused, should be withdrawn, either by Imperial decree or by the common law of the nation that has been so pitifully fleeced and flayed. If the Pope has been made a tool of by others, he must be strengthened against these; if he is himself the oppressor, he is to be resisted as a tyrant and a wolf. If the Turks must be quelled, let the Germans be trusted to quell them. In Germany there are soldiers enough to be had; let the money be kept there till it is applied to its purpose, and not sent to Rome to be worse than wasted. Robbers and tricksters, armed with unnumbered wiles, these Romans bring all into one huge current moving towards the insatiable maw of the Pope. It were no wonder if God rained brimstone and hell-fire upon Rome and sank it in the abyss like Sodom and Gomorrha of old. If we hang thieves and behead robbers, why should we give free scope to that Roman avarice which is the greatest thief and robber ever seen upon earth, or likely to be seen?

No payment, then, of *annates!* Also no tolerance of those Roman devices—those Papal shifts and quibbles—commendams, reservations, exemptions, *et hoc genus omne*—by which all Church affairs of the simple Germans are drawn towards Rome, there to be arranged in pure subservience to the demands of Roman greed, and for behoof of Papal courtiers! When the Papal courtier deputed to Germany appears with his parchments, his

seals, his bans, his briefs, he is to be advised to take himself off again, and with promptitude; or, if he likes better, to spring into the Rhine, and give himself and his documents a cold bath. Under the auspices of avarice, of intrigue, of Papal favouritism, ecclesiastics were appointed who proved to be mere ciphers and phantasms, devoid both of learning and of worth. All efficiency of discipline, all vigour of local government in the Church, vanished under the influence of this Romish centralisation, dependent upon avarice. False freedom—freedom to do wrong—prevailed, and the Pope showed himself the protector of licence, the patron of immorality, in short, the Man of Sin foretold by the Apostle. Therefore let the appointment of Bishops, Abbots, and other ecclesiastics, be managed at home, in accordance with the wise and honoured injunction of the Council of Nice. Let no application be made to Rome in connection with the affair—no dignifying sanction, no far-fetched ceremony or pageant, or fuss of any kind, no robe or pallium, be asked for or accepted. If recourse must be had to the Pope, let it be only in cases of such importance and difficulty that the Bishops and Archbishops of Germany declare themselves incapable of deciding. And let the rule be absolute that no secular question shall be taken by appeal to Rome.

The personal pretensions of the Pope—his assumption of superiority in pomp and place to Kings and Kaisers—must be abated. These are in repulsive contrast to the lowliness of Christ, in glaring contravention of Christ's inculcation of brotherly equality and absolute

prohibition of lordship. It is diabolical pride and vanity in the Pope to give his feet for Emperors to kiss, or that he, poor malodorous sinner,* should not take the sacrament like other people, but should have it extended to him on a golden rod by a Cardinal. Who has empowered the Pope to display such monstrous arrogancies? Was it Christ, who said, "The princes of this world exercise lordship, but do ye not likewise"?

### *Papal Pretences.*

One's soul is vexed by the shameless, gross, nonsensical lies that are told and taught in the canon law. Falsehoods invented by the devil are made the basis of ordinances to enthral Christendom. Such was that unprecedented lie of the Donation of Constantine. It must have been by especial judgment of God that so many intelligent people have let themselves be persuaded into an acceptance of such falsehoods. So gross are they, so clumsy, that one should think a drunken clown might produce lies more clever and adroit.

Pilgrimages to Rome ought to be discouraged. There might not be much harm in them, but there was less of good. The first time, says the proverb, a man goes to Rome in search of a knave; the second time, he finds him; the third time, he walks him home under his own hat. But people are now so smart that they compress the three experiences into a single visit; and make such an impression on their return that their friends

* *Armer stinkender Sünder.* Oh, Doctor! where are your manners?

wish they had never seen the Holy City. And it were well to put some check upon the building of beggar-convents. No good is done, no good will ever be done, by so much running and roving about the land. Let there be amalgamation of Orders, curtailment of numbers, regular subsistence, abatement of beggary. The preaching and confessing of the monks, fruitful of brawls and vexation between them and the clergy, might be abridged. It is easy to perceive that the Holy Roman See augments the army of preaching friars for its own purposes. A hold is thus kept upon the multitude, and the reforming tendencies of Priests and Bishops are curbed. Away also with oaths and vows! Association if you please, but let its law be the spontaneity of Christian freedom!

*Celibacy of the Clergy.*

The yoke of celibacy must be broken from the neck of the priesthood. By the appointment of Christ and His Apostles every town should have its Pastor or Bishop —these words being synonymous—and to each of these it is permitted to have a wife. The Roman See, putting its own model in the place of the simple pattern of Apostolic Christianity, forbade Parish Priests to marry. By so doing it fulfilled a prophecy, in which the said substitution was imputed to the devil. "There shall arise teachers, who will bring in devil's doctrine, forbidding to marry." Thence have arisen woe and lamentation, passing the power of man to tell. The Greek Church drew itself off from the innovation. In the West ensued division, sin, shame, vexation without end. What to do? Look

the fact, as it stands, in the face. For the future, let marriage be as free and honourable for clergy as for laity. For the present, let the Parish Priest, sincerely Christian, who has been in everything but name the faithful mate of a faithful and loving woman, cast off all sense of shame and fling all weight from his conscience, taking to himself the name of husband, and giving her the name of wife. The two are assuredly, in the sight of God, married. Say the Pope what he may, they break no law, spiritual or temporal. For the orderliness, the thrift, the comfort of a woman in the house, what man could more conspicuously have need than the Pastor? Is he then, with approbation of the Pope, to have a woman to keep his house, but not to be his wife? It is the worst, the most cruel, of all possible arrangements. It is an attempt to serve God by outraging nature. It is to put straw side by side with fire and to forbid flame. The Pope has no more right to forbid marriage under those circumstances than to forbid eating and drinking. No man can be bound to obey such a law. But on the Pope is heaped the guilt of all those sins which such tyrannous ordinances have produced—of all the souls that through them have been lost—of all the consciences that through them have been bewildered and tormented.

*Mechanical Prayers and Church Festivals.*

There must be an overhauling and cutting down of ecclesiastical celebrations, and the singing or saying of masses for departed souls. The heart of the matter in

these celebrations is to get gold or to indulge in eating and drinking. Prayers mumbled over for money—prayers dealt out by tale and time—are not likely to be potent with God. "Oh, my dear Christian friends, God lays stress not on praying *much* but on praying *well*. Nay, he expressly condemns long and many prayers (Matt. vi.)."

All festival days ought to be abolished, and Sunday alone declared to be the day of worship. If the festivals of our Lady and of the great Saints are to continue, they may be assigned to particular Sundays. Or if celebrated on other days, they ought to be confined to morning mass, the body of the day being set free for labour. What with gluttony, play, idleness, and all manner of sins, the holy-days have been desecrated, and the work-days have become sacred. In fasting, too, the law of Christian liberty is to be asserted. Gentle and delicate souls are not to be made wretched with conscientious scruples. Nor is a sickly and squeamish terror in respect of priest-made sins to be permitted to enervate the conscience. People are capable of fancying themselves greater sinners for taking as much bread and butter as they want than for lying, swearing, or incontinence.

*Miracle-Shrines.*

The miracle-pilgrimages to chapels and extemporised field-churches—Wilsnack, Sternberg, Treves, Grimmenthal, Regensburg—ought to be peremptorily put down. Oh, what an account will those Bishops have to render who sanction such devil's-mummery, and reap from

it gain! It is the devil that promotes such business, with a view to strengthen avarice, to encourage false and factitious belief, to draw the people from parish churches, to increase tippling and immorality, to waste money and labour, and to lead the multitude by the nose. It boots not that miracles are wrought in those places. The devil can work wonders, as Christ has told us (Matt. xxiv.). Were there no other token that these things are not from God, this would be proof enough—that the crowds, raging along without reason, troop like cattle towards the shrines. This cannot be from God. Besides, He has given us no command concerning it; and what rests on no Divine command, and yet pushes itself forward more importunately than duties expressly enjoined by God, must be of the devil. The whole affair is a sign of gross unbelief among the people. Everyone busies himself about getting up pilgrimages, instead of looking to soundness of faith and purity of manners. The leaders of the people are as the people—blind leading the blind. If the pilgrimages fall off, the Saints are cried up—not for the sake of honouring them, but with a view to concourse and the spending of money.

Who gave authority to the Pope to set up Saints? Who tells him whether they are true saints or are not? Are there not sins enough upon earth, without tempting God by erecting shrines to Mammon under cover of the blessed Saints? In the parish church you may have baptism, sacraments, Gospel-preaching, and the fellowship of your neighbours; and what more could all the

Saints in heaven give you? Neither Angel nor Pope can afford you so much as God has provided for you in your parish church. But, in truth, the Pope allures you from the Divine gifts, which you have for nothing, to his own gifts, which you must pay for, and which are worth nothing. For gold he gives you lead, for meat leanness, for a full purse an empty bag,* for honey wax, for substance words, for spirit letter. You see it with your eyes, and yet will not take note of it. Trust yourself to the Pope's parchments and seals for conveyance to heaven, the chariot will break, and you will go down, *not* in God's name.

*Papal Dispensations. Antichrist.*

Then there are the Papal dispensations—the permissions, sold for money, to tamper with conscience—the unbinding of oaths and vows—the violation of truth and faith. Were there no other proof that the Pope is Antichrist, this adulterating of virtue in its very fountains would be evidence enough. Do you hear me, Pope!—not the all-holiest but the all-sinfullest!—may God in heaven overturn thy chair and sink it in the abyss of hell! Who has given thee power to exalt thyself over thy God, to annul and reverse His commands? By what right dost thou instruct all Christians, and especially the German nation, a people of noble strain, renowned in all histories as faithful and true, to become faithless, perjured, treacherous, villainous, false? God has bidden us keep oath and troth

* *Fell um's Fleisch, Schnur um den Beutel.*

even to foes, and thou presumest to set the command aside. In thy heretical Antichristian decretals thou claimest the right to set this command aside. Through thy throat and by thy pen Satan lies as he never lied before. You do violence to Scripture according to your arbitrary will. Ah, Christ, my Lord, look down, proclaim the day of judgment, and harry this devil's nest at Rome! Here sits the man of whom St. Paul has said that he would exalt himself above Thee, sitting in Thy Church as a god, the man of sin and son of perdition. The Israelites, though ensnared into taking an oath to the Gibeonites, yet observed that oath. But Ladislaus, King of Poland and Hungary, having been prevailed upon by the emissaries of the Pope to break his oath to the Turks, was by them defeated and slain along with a great number of his people. The pious Kaiser Sigismund never saw good day after he let himself be persuaded, at the Council of Constance, to violate the safe-conduct he had granted to Huss and Jerome. Who can tell the woe produced by the Popes tearing up, in their devilish audacity, oaths and engagements between princes? The judgment-day is, I hope, at the door; things cannot reach a worse pass than the Romish See has brought them to. God's commands it casts down; Papal commands it sets up. If he is not Antichrist, pray tell me who Antichrist is.

### *Heretics and Death by Fire.*

The time has come for seriously taking up the question of the Bohemians and speaking the truth

about it, with a view to putting an end to the vile recrimination, hatred, and envy that exist on both sides. John Huss and Jerome of Prague, in the teeth of all Christian, Papal, and Imperial safe-conducts, were burnt. Whatever our opinion of these men may be, no defence can be offered for this proceeding, and the Bohemians are not to be blamed but commended for resenting it. God has commanded that pledged faith shall be unbroken, and the command must be obeyed, though the world should sink. To a heretic—to the devil himself—a sworn promise is not to be turned into a lie. Nor is fire the instrument with which to treat heresy. Heretics ought to be refuted from Scripture, as they used to be by the early Fathers, not extinguished in fire. Were the fire-method the right one with heretics, then would hangmen be our most learned Doctors, and we might lay aside our studies, leaving it to those who have physical force to bring heretics to the stake. As for the Bohemians, they ought to be dealt with in a spirit of gentleness, patience, and forbearance. Christ Himself had to converse long with His disciples, and bear with their want of faith, before teaching them to believe in His resurrection.

### *University Reform and Aristotle.*

The Universities want a sharp and thorough reform. I must speak out, be offended who may. Under the auspices of the Papacy the Universities have become nurseries of sin and error. The blind heathen master, Aristotle, is their presiding genius, rather than Christ.

Let his books, *Physica*, *Metaphysica*, *De Animâ*, *Ethica*, be discarded. Have we not Holy Writ to richly instruct us in things of which Aristotle had not the faintest surmise? The dead heathen has overcome and obstructed the Books of the living God to such an extent that when I consider the lamentable result I feel that the spirit of evil must have introduced the study of him. His book of ethics is flatly opposed to God's grace and Christian virtue, and yet it is reckoned one of his best. Away with such books from all Christian hands!

Let no one tell me that I run down what I know nothing about. I know well, dear friend, what I say. Aristotle is as familiar to me as to you and the like of you. I have read him with more understanding than Scotus or St. Thomas; that I can, without self-praise, affirm, and, if necessary, prove. I am not alarmed by the fact that so much high intellect has been at work on him for hundreds of years. It is plain as day that in the world and in the Universities, errors not a few have maintained their vitality for hundreds of years. I should not object to the use of the logic, rhetoric, and poetics, of Aristotle, only striking off the enormous mass of gloss and commentary. Besides these there ought to be the languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, mathematics, and history. Above all things, in Universities and in schools, Scripture ought to be read. It is the Christian's vineyard, in which he ought always to be at work. There are too many theological books, and it will be necessary to apply to them stringent rules of

selection. Not much reading, but good reading of good matter, is the secret of learning. Would to God, also, that every town had a girls' school in which, for an hour daily, girls should hear the Gospel read. The schools instituted formerly in monasteries and nunneries, as by St. Agnes and other Saints, were excellently in accordance with the intent of Christianity; but the school work has been superseded by mere singing and prayer.

### *Economical Matters.*

Enough now of spiritual concerns. We shall glance briefly at things economical. A universal, spontaneous resolution and decree of the nation is wanted to discourage that wastefulness and costliness in dress whereby so many people of rank and wealth have been reduced to poverty. God has given us, as He has given to other lands, abundance of wool, hair, flax, and all that an honest nation wants, in its various orders, for respectable clothing. What cause, then, have we to waste huge masses of treasure on silk, satin, cloth of gold, and the like foreign productions? Everyone tries to outshine his neighbour; pride and envy increase; and misery ensues. On the same ground is sumptuous excess in food — spicery and foreign dainties — by which money is drawn from German lands, to be condemned. By God's grace there is produced for us in our own country as much meat and drink, and of as rare and excellent quality, as any land can boast of.

*Agriculture* v. *Trade.*

I shall perhaps be called a fool proposing impossibilities and pulling down the great trading interest. Well, I find no instance in history in which sound morals followed in the wake of trade. It was for this reason that God placed His people Israel away from the line of sea-coast, and did not encourage them to be shop-keepers.

And in very truth we must contrive to curb the Fuggers and such colossally rich concerns. How is it possible that things should be well in the sight of God or man if, within the allotted span of human life, such mountains of gold, such royal estates, can be heaped up? I am not versed in arithmetic; but this I absolutely cannot understand—how from a hundred gulden one can reap twenty every year, nay, can make the coin double itself. It is not done from corn or cattle, for the wealth of the ground cannot be multiplied by human wit but depends upon the kind appointment of God. I commend the problem to the knowing ones of this world. This, however, I know, that it were a far goodlier business to extend agriculture and check trade. They are on the right track who work the land and seek a living there. To us and to all speaks Holy Writ in the book of Adam: "Cursed is the land for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." There is still much land that has not been broken up and subjected to culture.

*Gorging and Guzzling.*

It follows from our gorging and guzzling that we Germans have an evil report in other lands. Preaching has no power over those things, so mightily have they got the upper hand. The loss of wealth were of slight consequence, but hideous vices and crimes—murder, adultery, theft, blasphemy—follow. The sword of the magistrate may do something to stay the evil; otherwise will the judgment-day, as Christ says, be upon us like a thief in the night, while we eat and drink, buy and sell, marry and give in marriage. Things are reaching such a pass that I verily believe the judgment-day is at the door, little as people think of such a thing.

*The Social Evil.*

Is it not lamentable that houses of ill fame should have to be tolerated in our towns? Among a population that has been washed in Christ's baptismal fountain, does the same necessity reign as in the old pagan cities? The alternative evils of households desolated by shame, marriage unions broken up by adultery—are they indeed to be contended with in no other way? May not one dare to hope something from the governing class? Could they but learn what a terrible thing it is to sit in the place of authority and yet to do no royal work! What boots it although, in personal character, a nobleman is as devout as St. Peter, if he does not diligently apply himself to help those under his station? If only the governing classes (*die Obrigkeit*)

were to lay their heads together to devise some method of bringing young people together in marriage, so that everyone might hope to enter the marriage state, it would be an immense help to good resolutions, an immense encouragement to fight off temptations. At present young men rush to be parsons and monks, ninety-nine in every hundred of them impelled by despair of making a livelihood sufficient to keep a wife. They take their fling by way of preliminary, sowing their wild oats, or rather, to speak the truth, sowing wild oats of vice and passion in their own breasts. I find the proverb true that despair makes the majority of monks and parsons. I earnestly advise that neither man nor woman should take vows of celibacy before thirty years of age. And where your object is a bit of bread, I entreat of you to avoid entering the monastic state. If you have not faith enough to trust God for temporal things, you will find that much less does your faith fit you to cope with the duties of a spiritual calling. Ah, it is unbelief and lack of trust in God that ruins everything, and brings in the woe and lamentation that abound in every rank. Young people have none to look after them. Social anarchy reigns, and the governing classes are as good as nothing at all ; whereas the care of youth ought to be the most honourable and earnest concern of Pope, Bishops, Nobles, and Councils. They would rule far and wide, and yet shrink from doing any one useful thing. Oh, how rare, on this account, will be the sight of a magnate or governor in heaven, though he should build God a

hundred churches and bring all the dead out of their graves!

*Closing Words.*

That will do for this time. I shall be told that I have pitched my note too high, that I have struck at some things too sharply. I cannot help it. It is laid upon me to speak. I shall brave the world's anger rather than God's. They can but take my life. Again and again I have offered peace to my opponents; but I perceive that God has, through them, compelled me always to open my mouth wider than before, and, since they scorn moderation, to give them something to speak, bark, shriek, and write about. Let them come on, if they want more. I have another shot in the locker for Rome. If I fire it, the sound will not fail to be heard! You know, friend Rome, what I mean, don't you?

God grant us all a Christian understanding, and to the Christian Nobility of the German nation especially a right spiritual courage, to do their best for the poor Church!

Such—in so far as an abstract, severely abbreviated and inevitably enfeebled, may do justice to its main drift and its salient features—was this epoch-making address. No piece by Luther is more marked by what was always a characteristic of his work—breadth. It seems hewn with mallet and chisel out of rock, rather than written with pen. The effect was instantaneous. Four thousand copies were printed early in August, and before the end of the month a second edition was called

for. Acclamations of assent and applause rang out from the great Teutonic kindred as from one magnificent orchestra, and we shall not greatly err if we date from this time the commencement of that sovereignty over the hearts and minds of his countrymen which was so long held by Luther. Ulrich von Hutten, Sickingen, and other gallant knights, bade him stand firm, and offered to encircle him with their swords.

He was not, however, without his sorrows. Some of his best friends, including Spalatin, Lange, and Staupitz, remonstrated sharply against his violence. He appeals to the example of St. Paul and the Prophets, but he is not without self-reproachful qualms, and is sometimes heavy of heart. "I am almost conquered by weariness," he writes to Spalatin. "I can see little fruit of gratitude to God resulting from my efforts. Perhaps the fault is wholly mine." Noble Martin! He could wish, he says, "if it pleased God," to be discharged from preaching and teaching. Modest hero! Not for the like of him is rest. Well loved of God they may be, but they are not those loved ones for whom His gift is sleep.

One bright glimpse of comfort he had, on which, did space permit, it might be pleasant to linger—the marriage of Melanchthon. As is often the way with men who pre-eminently want wives, and are eminently fitted to make wives happy, the gentle Grecian, buried in his books, and, as Luther says, *corporis incuriosissimus*, utterly negligent of his bodily wants, had no mind to matrimony. His friends conspired to make a married man of him. Luther was in the scheme, though he

declined to accept the dread responsibility of choosing the woman. In November of this year, 1520, the ceremony was performed. "My parents and sisters," wrote Luther to Spalatin, "honoured the nuptials of Philip with their presence, along with most honourable and learned persons."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BULL.

Need we wonder, when we consider Luther's activity, from the promulgation of the Theses to the issue of the Address to the Germans, that the opposition to him in Rome now reached a climax? If the Pope had any weapon in his armoury that could be used against such a man, the time, unless he meant to descend from his throne and be for ever fallen, had come for using it. Eck had exerted himself strenuously in Rome. The multitude in the Holy City had seconded his endeavours. The cardinals had become awake to the perils of the situation. Even fine gentleman Leo had shaken off his supineness. A Bull was in training.

The reader must, however, be frankly informed that he has not yet heard of more than a part of Luther's belligerent operations against the Papacy. The Address to the Germans, tremendous as it was, had reference mainly to externals. But Luther produced also, at this period, a number of treatises and sermons on matters of an internal and vital kind, matters which no mere adjustment of pecuniary claims, or removal of practical abuses, could seriously affect. In these he dealt with the grounds on which the See of Rome based her

pretensions to supremacy in Christendom. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* contains enough to fill a small volume. The name is as usual an inspiration—an inspiration of genius intensely in sympathy with the time. Nor does much require to be added to the name in order to convey a fair conception of the work. Luther takes up in succession the sacraments of the Church, and attempts to point out their true nature and to prove the unrighteous subjection of them, by the Papal tyranny, aided by the scholastic philosophy, to its own purposes.

In another tract, in name and form a sermon, he treats of *The Freedom of a Christian Man*. Again the title is a watchword—a blazon to inscribe on the banner of a cause. And the piece is very noble, very characteristic. Martin Luther lives and speaks in its every sentence. It is comparatively exempt from the tone and terms of personal controversy—an immense advantage; for the coarseness and fierceness of Luther's manner in dealing with personal antagonists are, once for all, deplorable. The exultant confidence and joy in God, and in the Word of God, with which it overflows, are like the foam of a torrent in sunlight. To us, after four hundred years of Bible reading and preaching, the luxuriance of its Scriptural quotations may be somewhat faded; but for readers of that age it had upon it the bloom of spring forests. Beyond any man then alive, Martin was "learned in the Scriptures." The Bible was for him the inspiration of Christ embodied in language. The reader must be cold indeed if he does not

experience a sympathetic warmth in listening to the accents of reverent enthusiasm in which Luther speaks of his Bible and his Christ. "The soul," he cries, "has no other thing either in heaven or on earth, in which to live, to worship, to be free, to be Christian, except the Holy Gospel, the Word of God, preached by Christ, as Himself says (John xi. 25), 'I am the Life and the Resurrection; he who believes in Me shall live for ever.' Again (xiv. 6), 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' Again (Matt. iv. 4), 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' We can be certain, therefore, that the soul can dispense with all else except the Word of God, and that without the Word of God nothing will help her. Having the Word, however, she wants no more, but finds in the Word enough, and more than enough, food, joy, peace, light, art, righteousness, truth, wisdom, freedom, and all good."

His portrait of the free Christian man, as he strikes it out and leaves it fronting the ages, with God's sunlight on its face, is not without grandeur. The Christian is a priest-like king and a king-like priest. Through his kingship he has power over the universe of nature; through his priesthood he has power with God. And this inheritance, belonging to the entire Christian people —to every Christian layman—had been metamorphosed into bondage to a hierarchical corporation, with its feet on the necks of the laity! Taking from laymen their Christian birthright of equality, the Roman manipulators of the Gospel had taken from them everything. "There-

with is taken away the whole intelligence of Christian grace, freedom, faith, and all that we have from Christ; and Christ Himself. Instead, we have received man-made law and works, and have wholly become bond-slaves of the most useless people upon earth."

The month of September had not ended when Luther heard that his arch-enemy, Eck, had returned from Rome armed with the Bull. Early in October he got sight of the document. His mind was promptly made up concerning it. Perceiving it to be at variance with the doctrine of omnipotent grace, he affirmed that it condemned Christ, and that if it prevailed the faith of the Church would be cancelled. He was grieved but not despondent. "I rejoice with all my heart that I am exposed to injuries for the best of causes. I am unworthy of vexation so sacred. I am now much more at liberty, being at length quite certain that the Pope is Antichrist, and that the manifest seat of Satan has been found."

Of this world-famous Bull—the best known that ever was issued—it is necessary to say but a few words. It opens with elaborate solemnity. God and the angels, the Apostles Peter and Paul, and the saints, are formally invoked to defend the Church against the assaults of the heretic. Forty-one propositions, representative of Luther's views, are separately proscribed. Some of these—the most important in Luther's eyes—are neither more nor less than common-places of the Augustinian scheme of theology, stated with that bluntness and bareness by which Luther was apt to startle his hearers.

Knowing that Pelagianism had been expressly condemned by Pope Innocent I. as a heresy, Luther was aware that in the propositions in question he was more true to Catholic theology than the authors of the Bull. He had never since his conversion deviated for an hour from the line of absolute consistency in maintaining that complete self-renunciation, unreserved surrender to God, renewal of the soul by faith in Christ—God everything, man nothing—were the essentials of salvation. Another set of propositions, included as heretical in the list of forty-one, had relation to the powers and privileges of the Roman Church. With these, again, are naturally connected views of the sacraments and of the priesthood. It is a heresy, says the Bull, to deny that the Church of Rome has been appointed by Christ to take precedence of all other churches till the end of time, in virtue of His gift to St. Peter. It is a heresy to say that absolution can be pronounced by laymen as well as by clergymen. It is a heresy to say that a Pope has ever been in error. And so forth.

But there is one of these Lutheran propositions, branded in this Papal Bull as heretical, which possesses for the modern world an interest clearly transcending that which attaches to the theological or ecclesiastical propositions. The thirty-third heresy of Luther is as follows: "*To burn heretics is against the will of the Holy Ghost.*" For twelve hundred years—ever since Christianity attained to decisive ascendancy in the Roman Empire—it had been the law of Church and State that the heretic should die by fire. The repeal of this law

was the charter of intellectual and moral freedom for mankind. The infallible Church inscribed the proposal to repeal it on the roll of Luther's infamies; and those who esteem him a mighty servant of God and of man, a prince among the benefactors of his kind, need ask no more than that this fact be remembered in his praise.

Eck, glorying in his Bull, found that opinion in Germany had undergone a vast change since he engaged in controversial duel with Luther at Leipzig. Instead of being greeted with applause in the scene of his former ovation he was received with freezing silence by the learned, and with hootings by the crowd. The students of the University, who a year before could scarcely be restrained by armed men, in dining chambers, from mixing the blood of the Wittenberg students with their *sauerkraut*, now raged so fiercely against Eck as to put him in panic for his life. They tore from him a number of copies of the Bull and flung them into the river. Afraid to put up in any hostelry of the town, he betook himself for shelter to the Dominican convent, where Tetzell had lurked a year before. It will be a ticklish business for Eck to find men in Germany to help him to execute the mandate of the Bull upon Martin Luther.

For Luther's part, he is more profoundly agitated with scorn and anger than he has ever been. He calls the Bull Satanic, and says that he is excruciated with a sense of its malignity. "What Satan, from the beginning of the world, ever spoke so impudently against

God? But what shall I say? The magnitude of this Bull's most horrible blasphemies overcomes me. I am thoroughly persuaded that the day of judgment is on the threshold. The kingdom of Antichrist begins to be finished." *

One part of the judgment pronounced against Luther by the Bull was that his works should be burnt. This item in the sentence he resolves to execute against the Bull itself. Accordingly—thus he writes, in calm historical style, to Spalatin—"In the year 1520, on the tenth of December, at the ninth hour, were burnt, at Wittenberg, at the east gate, near the sacred cross, all the books of the Pope: the Decree, the Decretals, the Extravagant of Clement VI., and the latest Bull of Leo X."

* De Wette, 268.

# Book IX.

## THE DIET OF WORMS.

1521.

# Book IX.

## THE DIET OF WORMS.

### CHAPTER I.

THE SITUATION—LUTHER'S POSITION AS A PROPHET-REFORMER.

In few words, with historical precision and lucidity—like Julius Cæsar giving account of one of his battles—Luther announced to Spalatin the burning of the Pope's Bull. As the blue smoke-wreath rose into the wintry air on that December day it symbolised much. Luther, as he looked at it, thought, perhaps, of the pillar of cloud by day which had signalled onward the Israel of God in their desert-journey. Three short years before, who so weak as Martin Luther! A penniless monk in his cell, with three fingers, a grey-goose quill, and the grace of God Almighty—such was his record. In the might of faith, obeying a voice which he, like Abraham, Moses, David, and Paul before him, believed to be authentically Divine, he smote at a gross and impudent iniquity. And now he publicly defies and denounces the spiritual potentate of the West, the Pope, who not only is himself a prince, but by the

authoritative tradition of a thousand years can command, for the suppression of heresy, the swords of all European kings. Monk Martin has become a potentate, nay, one of the foremost potentates of Christendom.

In the history of the world there certainly had not been at that time, and it may be questioned whether there has been at this time, any such instance of the suasive energy of spiritual ideas. All those who have accurate knowledge on the subject will admit that the first spread of Christianity was a slow and gradual process compared with the awakening of Europe by the preaching and writing of Luther. From the Golden Horn to the Irish Sea men had heard of Monk Martin, and of the uprising against the Papacy. In quick succession, blaze after blaze, the lightnings had flashed from his brain — sermons, theses, pamphlets, books, letters—each setting fire to some great heap of dry ecclesiastical rubbish, or striking down some pinnacle, laying low some buttress, of the regnant system. True, the world was ready for him ; true, the fuel-heaps were dry ; but without the flash—nay, the marvellous succession of flashes—they would not have caught fire.

Alone he did it ! Yes—though he had heroic predecessors, though he had ardent and effective fellow-workers—this may with substantial truth be said. Wickliffe, Huss, Savonarola, Erasmus, Hutten—honour to them all ! Had they not done good work Luther might have toiled in vain. But "the many fail, the one succeeds." The one has some peculiarity of faculty, some uniqueness of quality, which makes him the

miracle-worker. No scholar is a prophet—no Erasmus inspires a revolution. Huss and Savonarola lacked in different ways the Saxon's breadth of common-sense. Enough. The rarest combination of capacities met in this man—resulting in one transcendent capacity to assail the Papacy. Democratic turbulence, old German love of battle, these were undeniably present in him, but they couched side by side with an ingrained and invincible respect for kaisers, kings, noblemen, magistrates, all persons vested with lawful authority. Among these had long been included the Pope and other dignitaries of the Church; but he now firmly believed that the Pope was Antichrist, and viewed all Church dignitaries with misgiving.

He was not now the man he had been at the time of the Leipzig disputation. A clear addition had been made to his programme of reform—an addition so great as to modify, we might almost say to transform, his entire polemical scheme. His opposition to Rome had until that time been indirect, inferential, negative. Now he believed that the Papacy was a usurpation which on its own account ought to be overthrown. He held that the Church of Rome had arrogated to herself such lordship among the churches as was alien to the spirit and intents of Christ. He deemed himself bound to proclaim that the Pope was Antichrist. Nay, more, he was persuaded that Councils had fallen into error, and had put to death by fire true children of God. All the authority which he had formerly accorded to Church, Pope, or Council, he now accorded to Holy Writ.

But we must carefully remember that, though the area of his conflict had widened and he now called the nations of Christendom to internecine strife with Rome, he was scrupulously averse to the introduction of physical force into the Lord's battle. Never for a moment did he forget the spirituality of Christian dynamics. He detected at a glance the element of evil and peril involved in the sword-clashing of such men as Sickingen and Hutten. When the latter, exulting in the Address to the Germans, and furious at the Bull, wrote to Martin in the Cambyses vein of literal militancy, he met with no encouragement. Luther's letter to Hutten is lost, but we have what he wrote on the occasion to Spalatin. "I will not fight the Gospel fight with force and carnage—I have told the man so in black and white. By the Word has the world been conquered. By the Word has the Church been preserved. By the Word will her breaches be repaired. And Antichrist, as he began without hand, so he will perish without hand, by the Word alone." *

Immersed in Bible study—more familiar perhaps with Scriptural phraseology than any man of his century—Luther speaks here and elsewhere in the manner of a Hebrew prophet. The reader must note this well. It was with him no mere affectation. He seriously and in perfect calmness of mind believed himself to have a prophetic mission. No superstitious fancies, indeed, clouded his robust intelligence, nor did it ever occur to him to announce, as certified by miracle or prophetic

* De Wette, 283.

vision, anything for which he could not produce warrant from Scripture. But he believed that God had specially opened his mind to apprehend the Word, and had expressly commissioned him to prophesy against the modern Babylon. It was not in vanity or conceit that he entertained this belief. He pointed out that prophets had constantly, in the ancient times of inspiration, been chosen from among the poor and lowly, from among peasants and mechanics. His inferiority in respect of natural gifts or of culture to Melanchthon and others he was prompt and sincere in acknowledging. But when God made choice of him to call the Church to reformation, an authority had, he held, been bestowed upon him to which all souls loyal to the truth were bound to defer; an authority in virtue of which he could without arrogance claim extraordinary consideration from men as learned as Philip, as eloquent as Erasmus, and as highly placed as Pope and Emperor. And it is an incontrovertible fact, singular as it may seem to us, not only that his personal friends, those who were nearest to him and knew him best—men so able and instructed as Melanchthon and Spalatin—were prepared to recognise the justice and reasonableness of his claim, but that it had great influence on his contemporaries generally, including his opponents.

Let us not, in the insolence of modern sciolism, mock at all this. It was not nearly so unscientific as some may imagine it. We still recognise the prophetic claim in all provinces except the religious—the authority, to wit, of a certain untaught, unteachable, unaccount-

able insight. In sculpture, painting, poetry, even in science, we do so. Professor Huxley would, I have no doubt, acknowledge that in one glance of the eye of a man of scientific genius, a Darwin, a Forbes, a Faraday, there might be more of authoritative revealing than would result from the searching and study of a man of no scientific genius, though continued for a lifetime. Viewed scientifically, the position of Luther's friends and followers, in believing him possessed of a certain transcendency of insight in the religious province, corresponded, *mutatis mutandis*, to this opinion which I venture to attribute to Professor Huxley.

Even, however, if we set down the prophetic power of Luther as a fancy, not the less must we, if we would make ourselves at home in the sixteenth century, recognise the belief in it as a factor in history, a force in affairs. The persuasion, in its various degrees of strength, from a mere admission of possibility up to impassioned confidence, that Luther was a man of God empowered to speak to his generation, not only pervaded the mass of his followers, already in the end of 1520 an enormous multitude, but had a potent influence upon those who resisted him. In part—in great part—this persuasion was due to his personal character. That moral radiancy—that pure disinterestedness and elevation—which men have revered and trusted in all ages, down to that of Garibaldi and Gordon, encircled Luther. The sentiment of Europe, a sentiment diffused in the courts of princes and penetrating to the inner chambers of the Vatican itself, was to the effect

that, if one went to inquire of God, a more authentic message from Him might be had through this blameless monk, this preacher of righteousness, than by the lips of lordly cardinals, or of Leo spurred and booted for the chase. The early engravings of Luther testify, by the halo round his head, or the white dove of the Spirit breathing inspiration into him, to the moral radiancy and the authoritative consecration wherewith he was invested in the eyes of his contemporaries.

These considerations bear expressly on Luther's appearance at Worms. Unless we appreciate the purport of his claim to an authority substantially similar to that exercised by the prophets of the Hebrew dispensation, we may be constrained to regard as simply preposterous his general attitude and contention, at the time when the Emperor and Princes of Germany, assembled in Diet at Worms, summoned him before them. Look at the case. He had assailed the Pope in terms of unparalleled violence. He had publicly burnt the instrument in which the supreme ecclesiastical power in Christendom accused him of heresy. If there was such a thing as Church law in Europe—if the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff was part of the general European system—he had thus, without question, put himself within the grasp of legal authority. But he disallowed all such authority and yet claimed to be tried. His proposal, vaguely indicated rather than enunciated, was that a committee of pious and learned men should be named to be his judges. Even upon these, however, he imposed the condition of judging solely by Scripture,

and of convincing him that their application of Scripture was sound. In one word he practically required that the machinery in use for trying heresy in Europe should be set aside in his favour. "Scripture," he said in effect, "is the law of heresy for Christendom. Convince me out of Scripture, or by irresistible reasons, that my doctrines are heretical. Then, and only then, I will recant them." Under no ordinary circumstances could any man, with show of reason or form of right, demand that the whole system of public law in Europe should be put aside for his sake. But the case, though unique, is not preposterous when we understand him to say by implication: "The Spirit of God has spoken to my soul, enabling me rightly to interpret Scripture." In fact, he claimed to unseat the Pope and to reform the Church by light from heaven, the ray being transmitted from the throne of God to his mind, and falling upon the Bible page. Had the Divine right and the infallible wisdom of the Papal See been accepted in the Europe of Leo the Tenth, as they were accepted in the Europe of Hildebrand, such a plea would have been considered blasphemous presumption. But times were changed; faith in the Papacy had been shaken to the foundation. That one man, a simple monk, should have a right to rebuke and assail the Pope in the name of God and upon the authority of Scripture was indeed startling, but was no longer incredible.

In December, 1520, Frederick instructed Spalatin to learn from Luther how he was minded on the subject of the approaching Diet. If he were called to appear

before it, would he comply? He answered at once, and with decision. Yes, he would appear; if too ill to go otherwise, he would be carried thither. In the voice of his Kaiser, bidding him come, he would recognise the voice of God. Were they to slay him—as was likely enough, he said, since it was not to teach him that they sent for him—he must commit the matter to his Divine Father. "There still lives One who preserved the three children in the furnace of the Babylonian king." If it were God's will that he should die, what was his death compared with that of the Lord Jesus? In this cause danger was not to be taken account of. Having begun the good fight, he was bound not to leave the Gospel to be a laughing-stock to the ungodly—he was bound to shed his blood for the truth he had taught. "That our cowardly baseness and disgrace, and the boastful scorn of the adversary, should be the issue, may the merciful Christ avert!" So much for himself. More sincere, more manly words were never written. He will, if need be, seal his testimony with his blood—more he cannot do. But he is in no such mood of hysterical exultation as could make him oblivious to considerations, not of a personal but of a patriotic and loyal nature, which might render it a duty for him to guard his life, unless it were plainly necessary for him to offer it up. It is not his part, he says, to decide whether his life or his death would most effectually serve the Gospel, but it is for him to pray that the empire of Charles, in its beginnings, be not stained with his blood. "I should rather," he cries, "as I have often said, perish by the

hands of the Romans alone, than that he and his were drawn into the affair. You know what misery followed the Emperor Sigismund after the slaughter of Huss. From that day nothing went well with him. He died without a male heir. The son of his daughter, afterwards Ladislaus, perished. His wife became an infamy of queens." *

As evincing the practical character of his religion, and showing how calm, composed, and healthful was his personal life amid the tremendous agitations of his public career, we note that in the letter he wrote to Spalatin next after the preceding he urges his friend to plead with Frederick in favour of the people of Kemberg, who were oppressed by taxes, and had petitioned, through their Senate, for relief. "Know for certain," he adds, "that you serve God and do His will in the most essentially religious manner—*propriissimâ religione* —if you accomplish anything in this matter, or get the Prince to do anything." † In the same letter he intimates that he has brought the affair of a poor widow to a successful issue. At the very time when his wrestle with the Papacy was reaching its climax he perceived with clearest apprehension that the quintessence of religion lay in pleading for Christ's sake the cause of the over-taxed poor and the heavy-laden widow.

* De Wette, 277. † De Wette, 278.

## CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG EMPEROR—A NEW LEGATE—ROME OPENS THE ATTACK IN THE DIET—ALEANDRO'S GREAT SPEECH.

Charles V., when the princes of Germany were trooping together in obedience to his summons to meet him in Diet at Worms, might have been pronounced by a hasty observer one of the pets of fortune. Destiny had seemed to lay plans in his favour before his birth,* preparing for him one of the most magnificent empires that had ever affected the imagination of mankind. His European dominions were more extensive than had been reigned over by any monarch since Charlemagne; and in addition to a European empire comprising the fairest portions of Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany, besides the whole of Spain, he could claim the glories of a new world, that lay like a vision of dawn on the far Atlantic. And yet, when the stripling Kaiser, triumphing over every rival, was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1520, an eye keen enough to penetrate the veil of the future might have foreseen that he would have his share in the calamities and heart-eating cares of life. His empire was splendid but

* Robertson, *Charles V.*

heterogeneous. Spain had no sympathy with Italy; Germany had no community with either. His chief rival for the Imperial dignity, the King of France, had become his determined foe; in the Pope he could see but a questionable friend; and to the north of the Alps men seemed about to turn the world upside down in the name of reformation.

Not without human nobleness—not devoid even of kingly attributes—Charles was yet not quite the man that Europe wanted for Emperor of Germany in the days of Luther. His word was sacred—no priest, no Pope, could wheedle him into lying. He sincerely purposed the public good, and aimed to do his duty as the first potentate in the world. A far more solid man than Francis I., and morally sounder than the Popes, his contemporaries, he stands well among the crowned personages of his century. But he failed in those positive and transcendent qualities of genius that might have fitted him to be Luther's friend and fellow-worker. Tenacious of purpose, he was emotionally cold; no fervour, no impassioned glow, irradiated the meditative melancholy of his features. If, moreover, he was born heir of a magnificent realm, he inherited also certain maladies of the soul that might entitle him to the pity of healthy peasants. Such, indeed, could not well have been lacking to the child of Philip the handsome and Joanna the monomaniac. The languid eye, expressive of listless resignation and ineffective benevolence, is in keeping, in Charles's portraits, with the well-meaning but indeterminate mouth, the protruded lower lip of meditative

obstinacy and sadness. No small sense of justice and of duty—considerable sagacity and slow sureness of judgment in affairs—may be allowed to Charles; but the part of German Kaiser in the sixteenth century was beyond him. That Charles should have been Kaiser, and Martin Luther monk, is one of those facts which the Panglosses of philosophy and theology will have some difficulty in fitting into their theories of pre-established harmony in the best of all possible worlds. Had they but changed places what a different world it might have been!

Charles's up-bringing had been of the Spanish-Catholic type, the confessor always at his ear. Erasmus, who visited his court in Flanders, saw so many cowled heads about, perceived so strong an element of priestliness on all hands, that he intimated to his friends the damping of his hopes that much good would result to Germany through the instrumentality of the new Kaiser.

The Diet of Worms, at which Charles and Luther met, began its sittings early in 1521. Pope Leo, now alarmed and angry, had been bestirring himself. In the autumn of 1520 a new Legate had been made choice of to deal specially with the case of the Wittenberg rebel. Girolamo Aleandro, librarian of the Vatican, was one of the likeliest men that could have been found for the enterprise. Learned in Greek and Hebrew, and an eloquent Latinist, he was also versed in affairs and possessed of great energy. No charge could be brought against him of being dead to the aspiration

and advancing ardour of the age, for he had pushed his researches into Chaldaic and Arabic, and had been the intimate friend and co-worker of Erasmus.* He was now about forty years of age.

The line taken by the envoy was clear and business-like, and he commenced operations before the meeting of the Diet. Luther, he represented to the Emperor, was, on any showing, a heretic. If the authority of the See of Rome was supreme, this, of course, followed; for he called the Pope Antichrist, and proclaimed as God's truth scores of propositions which the Pope's Bull branded as heresies. If, on the other hand, General Councils were supreme in the Church, the case of Luther was equally desperate; for he expressly declared that the Council of Constance, in condemning Huss and Jerome to the flames, had murdered as heretics men who might have been crowned as saints. The question, therefore, was whether one man, Martin Luther, should set himself above Pope and Council alike—beyond the jurisdiction of any tribunal known to Christendom.

All this could be easily apprehended by Charles, and to apprehend it was, in his circumstances, and with his views, almost equivalent to making up his mind against Luther. The young Kaiser had an ample sense of his own dignity, and conceived it to be bound up with the stability of the Holy See and the permanence of that form of faith and worship which he had received from his ancestors. He acceded, accordingly, to Aleandro's proposal

* Roscoe, *Leo X.*

that Luther's writings should be forthwith committed, in the Netherlands, to the fire. This took place. The incident proved, however, favourable to Luther rather than the reverse; for it at once provoked an expression of surprise on the part of Frederick of Saxony.

It was well for Luther—well also for the progress of spiritual civilisation in Europe—that Frederick was at this period his counsellor and guardian. Frederick often found his Doctor hard to control; and Luther, for his part, valuing freedom more than life, and sensitively afraid of compromising his sovereign prince, was at times on the point of taking flight for Bohemia or some other land where he might be as free as an eagle dallying with the storm. But with Spalatin to smooth down difficulties, on this hand and on that, the Prince and the Reformer continued to work together for good. Urged by Aleandro and a host of priests and friars, Charles might have refused Luther an audience, and dealt with him as condemned already, had not Frederick represented the unfairness of such a course, and tried to open Charles's eyes, if not to the soundness of Luther's teaching, at least to the importance of the place he occupied in the admiration and affection of the Germans.

The most dangerous of the tactics adopted by the Papal party in the initial period of the Diet were those which had it for their object to wean Frederick from his trust in Luther, and induce him to become a consenting party to the policy, in religious affairs, of Charles and Leo. Glapio, the confessor of the Kaiser, a man whose words were softer than butter, and who

may indeed, like Miltitz, have been more or less friendly in his intents, approached Frederick, through his Chancellor Brück, with the studied representation that, in order to save and utilise the good, admitted to be insignificant neither in quantity nor in quality, in Luther's writings—in order, for example, that all Christian people might have the benefit of Martin's sweet and reasonable elucidations of the Psalms and other parts of Scripture—it was infinitely to be wished that he might clear himself from the imputation of being a blind and furious assailant of the sole ecclesiastical authority acknowledged in Western Europe for fifteen hundred years. Frederick did not forbid conference between Brück and Glapio, but refused to confer with Glapio personally on the subject of Luther. Can we blame him for drawing the line at the confessor? A perfectly intrepid Frederick, conscious of superlative insight and practised in controversial word-fence, might have felt that, in obedience to the rule, *audi alteram partem*, he ought to hear Glapio. But Frederick was no Hercules of intellect, no subtle and quick logician. His faith in Martin lay deeper than logic. His unfaith in Rome rested also on deeper grounds than he could logically set forth. He therefore drew the line at the confessor.

There is something touching in the fact that Charles, for all his Spanish *entourage*, for all his constitutional predisposition to regard a man whom priests called a heretic as an obvious incarnation of the devil, was unquestionably more or less haunted, at this period, by the notion that Luther might possibly, even though he

attacked Rome, have truth to speak from God. Charles knew that Erasmus, though always with that unfathomable smile of his which never gave *whole* assent to anything, had adopted a tone favourable to Martin. He now found that Frederick of Saxony, whom he knew to be religious, wise, and superior to all unworthy aims, believed the credentials of the Wittenberg Doctor to attest his authority as a man of God more authentically than all the archives of the Vatican evinced the infallibility of the Pope. Accordingly when Aleandro, soon after the opening of the Diet, obtained permission to make a speech against Luther, Charles pressed it upon him that if he would prevail, he must prove the monk not only an enemy of Rome but a preacher of doctrines at variance with Christian truth.

Aleandro was equal to the occasion. Maimbourg, the able and judicious, because not intemperate, advocate of the Papacy against the Reformers, tells us that he spoke for three hours, and the summary of the oration which Maimbourg inserts in his narrative demonstrates that it was admirably adapted to secure those ends for which Aleandro had come to Worms. As we consider its successive positions, we cannot fail to be struck by the *maturity* of the argument against Reformation principles which it presents. Romanists and quasi-Romanists have at this hour substantially no addition to make to the indictment which the Papal Legate presented to the Diet of Worms. Whether Maimbourg, golden-mouthed Jesuit, painted up the original, I shall not decide.

Aleandro opened the attack in form by quoting from Luther's books which he produced. They contained evidence, he submitted, that the sect which this heretic aimed at founding rejected and subverted all authority, and involved Church and State in a common destruction. The Divine right of the successor of St. Peter to be a judge of controversy Luther denied; the jurisdiction of General Councils he equally called in question. There being, therefore, in existence no authoritative definition of the sense of Scripture, its determination was left to the inventive caprice of every private person, and there would be as many religions as heads. From the spectacle of universal anarchy thus conjured up Aleandro turned to consider the doctrinal teaching of Luther. Like Eck at Leipzig, he charged him with an extravagant anti-Pelagianism which, rushing to the opposite extreme, destroyed the liberty of man, made moral evil and moral good alike impossible, threw open the gate to unbridled licentiousness, and provided for all crimes the plausible defence, nay the legitimate apology, that the doing of them could not be helped. By this heresiarch, in the next place, the validity of all the sacraments of the new dispensation was annihilated, for he denied that grace was by them conferred. He gave to all Christians the power of absolution. Under pretext of Christian freedom, most vilely understood, he released Christians from all control. He made light of vows solemnly undertaken, alleging that they constituted no obligation. In fine, he threw the whole world into the wildest confusion, shattering the laws and casting down the hierarchy.

In the Church he allowed no subordination, no obedience. For princes he had no respect. The majesty of God himself he impeached, for if his heretical tongue spoke truth, God commands us to perform impossibilities.*

Having reached his climax, Aleandro appealed to the Diet whether an evil so malignant, so menacing, so appalling, ought not to be encountered at once by an Imperial edict enjoining all ranks to execrate, and to assist in stamping out, the detestable heresy?

The effect of the oration was great. It is not too much to say that, in substantials, Aleandro carried his point. The sentiment of the Diet was against Luther. The members firmly resisted the attempts of his friends to obtain for him an opportunity to expound and defend his views. The Romanists were determined that there should be no repetition of the controversial experiences of Augsburg and of Leipzig. One thing, and but one, the advocates of reformation were able, after protracted contention, to obtain—that Luther should be asked to declare, in presence of the Diet, whether he was indeed the author of the books published in his name, and, if so, whether he would or would not retract the views expressed in them. He was to be permitted to plead in person—guilty or not guilty; explanation and defence were denied him. This was hard upon Luther; nor is it possible to reconcile the decision of the Diet with justice. Aleandro had been heard; every principle of equity and of law required that Luther should be heard also.

* Maimbourg, in Seckendorf.

## CHAPTER III.

AT WITTENBERG—LUTHER WRITES TO STAUPITZ—THE DIET IN PROSPECT—THE JOURNEY.

While the narrow old streets of Worms are bright with the glitter of equipages, loud with the jingling tread of armed retainers—while Aleandro's admired exordium and thrilling peroration ring in the ears of the Kaiser, princes, and nobles of Germany—what is going forward in the cell of the Augustine convent at Wittenberg, where sits or kneels the man who has caused all this commotion?

Luther, in those weeks, was the subject of profound agitation, but he possessed his soul in patience. He conceived of himself as tossed with tempests on a raging sea; but his faith in God was steadfast, and Christ was with him in the ship. Never had his conviction of the righteousness of his cause been more clear and strong. In the second week of February, at the very time when foes and friends were wrestling for him at Worms, he writes to Staupitz.* The pupil has now become the teacher. The Samuel, shall we say, once so pale-faced and deferential, plays the part of admonishing prophet

* De Wette, 292.

to Eli, right-hearted but infirm of purpose. Luther has heard that Staupitz has been addressed, in tones of reprimand and appeal, by Pope Leo. He has reason to believe also—or strongly to suspect—that Staupitz in his answer has gone too far in the way of concession. Should that be so he would have him recall it. "If Christ loves you, He will make you revoke this writing, for in that last Bull of theirs everything is condemned that you have either taught or tasted of the mercy of God." Having touched severely upon the favour evinced by Staupitz for the idea that the Pope, whom he sees raving and raging in hostile fury against the word of grace, should be judge in the cause, Martin goes on to say that this is not a time to crouch abashed and fearful, but a time to cry aloud, seeing that the Lord Christ is "condemned, cast out, and blasphemed." "By how much you exhort me to humbleness, by so much do I exhort you to a proud fortitude—*superbiam.*" This, he avers, is specifically a time for confessing Christ before men; and he expresses the solemn determination that, God helping him, he will not be ashamed of his Lord. "Let me be found chargeable with pride, with avarice, with adultery, with murder, with setting myself up as a rival Pope, with any vices and with all: only let me not, in the hour when my Lord suffers, be found guilty of an impious silence."

He fears that Staupitz wavers between two—"Christ and the Pope." Between these the strife is irreconcilable. "Our part be it to pray that the Lord Jesus may destroy, with the spirit of His mouth, and

destroy quickly, this son of perdition. But if you do not wish to follow with me, let me go alone and be slain —*rapi*. By the grace of Christ I shall not refrain from proclaiming to this portent of iniquity its own portentous iniquities—*portento huic sua portenta*."

This memorable letter is one of a host of proofs that at the date of the Diet of Worms an arrangement between the Papacy and Luther had become impossible. Not only to preach the truth, but to tear down the hierarchical canopy that had veiled the heavens, is now for him an imperative duty. He has ceased to distinguish between Leo's person and office, simply characterising him as a "wolf." Meanwhile his activity is varied and enormous. In a corner of this same letter to Staupitz he says that he keeps three presses going.

One item there is, in the list of occurrences during those weeks, that does not surprise us, and that ministers to a virile satisfaction—his discontinuance of monkish observances. He mentions the fact to friend Lange of Erfurth in a letter dated nearly a month later than this tremendous one to Staupitz. His tone to Lange is sternly cheerful, although the tale of his labours almost staggers belief. A hydra-host of enemies are upon him, some German, some Italian, some Dutch. The proverb, *Ne Hercules quidem contra duos*, will not, he says, suit him, for he has to do battle not with two but with ten. And his polemical warfare is the least of his exertions. He preaches and teaches, in pulpit and professor's desk. He is writing on the Psalms. He is writing on the New Testament. "But I have

been discharged from obedience to my Order, and am excommunicated by the Bull: and I rejoice that it is so, and embrace the opportunity of ridding myself of everything in monkery except the garb and the cell." And so, once and for ever, Martin Luther puts from him, with all its apparatus of hours and rosaries and regulations, the monkish method of dividing and disposing of time. No more set prayers, uttered at set hours; no more working out of salvation by mindless iteration of pious phrases. Time and energy are thus left free for clearing the world's atmosphere of the ecclesiastical cobwebs that have barred the sunlight for a thousand years; and Martin dares to think that such work is worship—worship more pleasing to the Infinite Mind than the most devout mumbling of regulation prayers.

He scans, from his Wittenberg cell, the general field of Germany, noting how the conflict, now everywhere begun, between Popism and Reformation proceeds. The Bishop of Meissen, the Bishop of Merseburg ("most proud, most covetous, in his ostentatious humility") are fiercely in favour of the old order, and have burnt "waggon-loads" of his writings. Under other auspices the Bull, placarded in public places, gets smitten with filth or torn down, or is taken forcibly from officials and flung into the nearest river. Young Germany, especially the young Germany of culture as represented by the University students, goes vehemently for reform.

Now that the Diet is sitting at Worms, and

Aleandro pleading eloquently for the Pope and against Luther, it occurs to some stripling of light and leading among the Wittenberg undergraduates, some Hamlet or Horatio of the period, that the occasion might be suitable for an anti-Papal demonstration. Chiefly in the nature of high jinks, but with a spice of earnestness in the affair, was this feat of the reforming Hamlet and his fellow-students. On an appropriate vehicle, aloft and costumed in befitting pomp, they placed a figure representing the Pope. Around, at due distance, were ranged the Cardinals. The vehicle was drawn about the town, not without noise, laughter, and bacchanal tumult, and landed in the market place. There, ejected or projected from their car, the play-acting Pope Leo and his Cardinals were driven off into different parts of the town by undergraduate throngs, and hunted with loud laughter and horse-play. Doctor Luther loved a joke, and did not pretend to be scandalised by the rioting of these bold bacchanals. "The enemy of Christ," he said, "deserves to be thus turned into derision, he who has made a mock of the greatest Kings, nay of Christ."

Practical in all his instincts, Luther had an admirably clear and comprehensive idea of ways and means. He admitted the ministry of jest, the use of man's faculty of humour, into the service of truth, taking care only that it should not be usurped or simulated by ribald and godless scorn. Cranach's woodcuts, symbolically illustrating the antithesis between Christ and Antichrist, he at this time signed with his name. Such

things, he felt, might have a good effect, especially with laymen.*

His own most congenial occupations were such as kept him close to Scripture, annotating the Psalms, following the harmonies of Gospel and Epistle, or beating out the music of that most ancient of Christian hymns which expresses the wonder and the chastened joy of Mary in being destined to become the mother of her Lord. Among the last things he did before departing for Worms was to write a dedication of his treatise on the Gospel narratives to the Elector, and a dedication of his exposition of the Magnificat to Duke Johann Frederick, nephew of the reigning Prince.

For utmost precision in defining his position when it still rested with him to take flight from Germany or to leave for Worms, we must glance into his letters to Spalatin and to Frederick, both bearing date March 19, 1521.† In these he deals with the explicit question whether he will recant or will not, and whether, if the alternative of recantation is death, he will still obey a summons to Worms. He has evidently, as we perceive in previous letters, been keeping himself accurately informed of what was being done at the Diet. The circumspective glance of a great general in the field, the vigilant alertness and lucidity of a great lawyer in keeping together the threads of a case, were more in the way of our Doctor than the sanctimonious heedlessness to facts which one is apt to associate

* De Wette, 300. † De Wette, 301—302.

with the religious character. Both to Spalatin and to Frederick he writes with energetic brevity. He has received, he tells Spalatin, the articles he may expect to be called on to recant. "Be you quite sure," he says, "that I shall recant nothing." If he is summoned to Worms to recant *simpliciter*, he will refuse to go. Recantation, if executed at all, could be done at Wittenberg as well as at Worms. But if called upon to die, obey the summons he will, since it is that of his Kaiser. His adversaries, he is perfectly sure, will not be quieted till they have his blood. To Frederick he writes less peremptorily, and with studious respect, as becomes a subject to his Prince, but with equal decision on the main points.

Here, at last, on Tuesday, the 26th of March, is the Imperial herald, Caspar Sturm, bearing the Imperial mandate to summon him to Worms. The Emperor grants a safe-conduct for the journey, and the difficulty as to recantation is taken out of the way, Luther not being required, at the present stage of the business, to give a pledge on the subject. On the 2nd of April, in a travelling waggon furnished by the Wittenberg authorities, roofed in against sun and rain, with Caspar Sturm riding before, and town and gown wishing him God-speed, he takes the road. In the waggon there went also three others. Though he had cast off allegiance to the convent, he had no objection to benefit by the kindly rule that every monk should be attended in travelling by a brother of his Order. In addition to this companion, Petsensteiner by name, there rode with

him, by way of volunteer escort, Peter Swaven, a young Pomeranian nobleman, then studying at Wittenberg, and Amsdorf, his colleague in the University and ardent fellow-worker in the cause of reform.

And so he proceeds, with dignified celerity but no haste, through towns and districts which have long been familiar to him, and where his name is now a sound that stirs the blood. Once more, while the woods are being fledged with the first delicate splendour of gold-green leafage, he moves along the roads which he took on his old journey to Heidelberg. Then he went on foot, and though he met with eager welcome from a few sympathising friends, there was little more than an audible whisper of him as he moved along. His course is now the progress of a nation's hero and favourite. Charles himself, when he made his first visit to Germany as Kaiser, did not excite so lively an interest. Not only did the populace receive Luther with acclamations, but cities and universities, undeterred by fear of offending Pope or Kaiser, bestowed honour upon him. At Leipzig the magistrates sent to him the present of wine usually bestowed upon illustrious strangers. At Naumburg a priest, well-disposed to his cause, brought him a portrait of Savonarola, and finding that he was not abashed by the omen, but put from him all terrors as temptations of Satan, bade him go forward and plant his foot firmly on the truth of God. At Erfurth, the scene of his University studies, of his spiritual new birth and initiation into the office of a reformer, he was received with extraordinary enthusiasm. The Erfurth students had

signified their minds concerning the Papal Bull by tossing it into the river. Crotus, a front-rank figure among the German Humanists, had recently been chosen Rector of the University. Between him and Luther there was old acquaintance, and if he did not enter fully into Martin's spiritual aims and motives, he vehemently sympathised with the Wittenberg movement as part of a comprehensive effort to break from Germany the yoke of foreign ecclesiastics and to assert the freedom of intellect. He now, at the head of forty horsemen, members of the University, met Luther near the town. In the welcoming party rode Eoban Hess, a Humanist poet of great distinction, who subsequently described the journey to Worms in Latin verse.

The processioning and saluting of his entry into Erfurth were succeeded, on the following day, Sunday, the 7th of April, by his very earnest preaching in the Augustinian convent. He discoursed on the subject to which, for him, all Scripture led up, the salvation wrought by God, not by man, the salvation by which man is transfigured in the light of God, the salvation by grace through faith. An immense audience hung upon his lips as he pressed this Christian message upon them with a fervent earnestness which Eoban Hess compares to that of Demosthenes or St. Paul. When his fervour had reached its climax, and the excitement of the audience was intense, a noise was heard in the gallery, and the impression ran from seat to seat that the structure was giving way. Panic began to spread, and a fatal rush to the doors seemed on the point

of taking place, when Luther paused and told the people not to be afraid. There was, he said, no danger. It was merely Satan attempting to obstruct him in preaching the truth; he knew the wiles of the enemy. Confidence was thus restored, and he proceeded with his sermon.

The incident, otherwise insignificant, calls our attention to a marked trait in the spiritual physiognomy of Luther. His conception of the evil power was singularly vivid, realistic, and personal. From his infancy he had thought of Satan as a malignant and subtle personality, commander of the dark natural forces that prey upon man, whose were the frost that shrivelled the buds in spring, the blight and mildew that dimmed the glory of summer, the rain that belied the promise of harvest, the desolating energies of plague, pestilence, and famine. That the power of good, the power of God, is infinitely superior to the power of evil, Luther would have held it blasphemy to deny. But evil impersonated in a living, scheming Satan was for him not one whit less credible than evil embodied in a cruel and treacherous man. It was part of the marvellous system of existing things that bad men and a Satanic spirit should alike wage war with God. Wonderful indeed it was that the Highest should permit a fiend to vex and thwart a minister of Christ; but intrinsically not more wonderful than that he should permit men to engage in similar operations. The practical point for Luther was that the soldier of righteousness was called upon in both cases to defend himself; that the Satanic

adversary was as really alive as Emser, or Eck, or Duke George, and much more formidable.

From Erfurth he passed on to Gotha and Eisenach. Here he was overtaken by illness almost serious enough to arrest his progress. Bending next to the south he paused in Frankfort, whence he wrote some lines to Spalatin, then at Worms, which are among the few indubitably historical notes of a journey that has accumulated around itself an efflorescence of fable. "We are coming, my Spalatin, though Satan has done his best to stop me by more than one form of malady. The whole way from Eisenach I have been ill, and I am ill yet, in a way I have never known before. I understand also that Charles has issued a mandate to strike terror into me. But Christ lives; and we will enter Worms though all the gates of hell and powers of the air say No." *

Luther's body might be ailing, but his mind was clear and calm. In all the multitude, from the Kaiser and the princes down to street mobs, interested in his journey, there was no one so completely master of the position as himself. While friends and foes wavered in their intentions and vacillated in their proceedings, now advising one thing, now another, now wishing him in Worms, now urging him not to enter the city, he never hesitated for a moment, or deviated by a hair's-breadth from the path he had marked out for himself. To those who warned him that his life was in danger he answered that, "if there were as many

* De Wette, 309.

devils in Worms as tiles on the houses, he would enter." From the men of moderation and conciliation he turned away with peremptory resolution. He knew that there could be no alliance, no truce, between him and the Papacy. On the 16th of April he entered Worms.

He had been fourteen days on the journey. From Elbe to Rhine, from Wittenberg to Worms, through the very centre of the German lands, he had come, by Leipzig, Naumburg, Weimar, Erfurth, Gotha, Eisenach, Berka, Hersfeld, Grünberg, Friedberg, Frankfort, Oppenheim. Escorted by the Imperial herald, accompanied by the earnest expectations, aspirations, fears, hopes of the great German kindred, confident that Satan had his eye on him, but still more certain that God was on his side, he had pressed on. He preached to vast congregations, he listened to cheering and to warning voices, he laid his hands on the heads of children to bless them, he met with cordial sympathy from at least one Bishop, Von Bibrach, the evangelical souls'-overseer of Würzburg, and was hailed by a woman, in extreme old age, with wishes of God-speed. The stern, woe-struck face of the martyr Savonarola, held up with its melancholy glance as a portent to warn him back, had not turned him from his path. At moments cast down and crying to God from the depths of his despondency, at other times exalted to the seventh heaven of exultant faith, always in fundamentally earnest mood, he nevertheless wore no air of anxiety, nor could the physical languor which, from Eisenach onwards, bore hard upon him, quench the vital gaiety of his spirit.

Even on this journey, to the scandal of Cochlœus, he had known how to take his ease in his inn, to share in innocent merriment, and even to contribute his mite to the entertainment in form of a tune on his flute. But in the foundations of his nature he was earnest as life and death. Healthy-minded, in no delirious or fanatical excitement, or arrogance of self-exhibiting vanity, but as a prophet of God, empowered to rebuke the rulers of the Church, he came.

## CHAPTER IV.

### BEFORE THE EMPEROR.

On Tuesday, in the third week of April, at about ten in the morning, seated in the covered waggon which the Wittenberg municipals had provided for him, and preceded by the Imperial herald, Luther entered Worms. Many riders, among them the most ardent of the young German nobility, had galloped out to meet him, and as he approached the gates he was the centre of a cavalcade of a hundred horsemen. When, from the top of the cathedral, the horn of the watchman announced his entrance, thousands rushed to see him. He put up at the hotel or hospital of the Knights of St. John. As he alighted, the glittering of his eyes caught the attention of the crowd. Aleandro, in writing to the Papal Court, made mention of the circumstance. The heresiarch's eyes sparkled, he said, like a demon's. At the hotel of the Knights of St. John, or in its immediate vicinity, lodged Philip von Feilitsch and the Elector Frederick. He was therefore in the midst of friends. In the remaining part of the day, and until deep in the night, many persons of distinction visited him.

The Diet, now in session at Worms, was connected in a vaguely representative manner with an institution

somewhat difficult to define, and which in great part was but *magni nominis umbra*, the Holy Roman Empire. Though the name was derived from Rome, the substance, in so far as it had substance, was mainly German. The Romans never conquered Germany, but the grandeur, the order, and the power of the imperial system made an infinite impression on the Teutonic imagination. When the material framework of the empire was shattered, the Germans felt the spell of Rome's spiritual ascendancy, accepted the religion that Rome had accepted, and deemed no pageantry of empire so august as that of a Roman Emperor. When Charlemagne assumed, at the hand of the Pope, the Roman purple and the diadem of Constantine, the European centre of physical force had shifted from the banks of the Tiber to those of the Rhine, the Seine, the Loire; but the centre of spiritual force, the fountain-head of religion and of learning, continued in Rome. An alliance was cemented between the Popes and the Kaisers; and those warrior Teutons who had never bowed to Pagan Rome looked with reverent awe upon the Holy Roman Empire.*

To avert schism in the Church, and to lend force and dignity to the State, by promoting the reign of justice and truth in both, was the lofty ideal of the new league. Charlemagne and Barbarossa may be credited with cherishing this lofty aim; and a few of the Popes were worthy of such allies. But most of the Holy Roman Emperors were failures; and the canker of subtle immorality soon struck its roots into the heart of the

* *The Holy Roman Empire.* By J. Bryce, D.C.L.

Papacy. From a very early period, the integrity of this grand alliance between the power spiritual and the power temporal had been vitiated on the Papal side by deliberate fraud. One principle at deadly variance with the teaching of Christ was incorporated in the Imperial constitution—that God's truth is to be defended by the sword. To put heretics to death was the first of Imperial duties. When the Papacy, in its indictment against Luther, specified as one of his appalling errors the opinion that heretics ought not to be punished with death, it signalised a point in which, as we have already seen, he had dared to controvert all that the associate powers of law and gospel had taught and practised in Europe since the days of Constantine.

Luther had been too intensely occupied as a theologian and preacher to render it possible for him to be fully informed as a politician, or to see his way through the labyrinths of state intrigue; but he had the eye of a supremely able man for the realities in whose presence he stood. Disencumbered of antiquarian theory, he saw in the Diet of the Empire an authentically representative gathering of the great German brotherhood. From Austria in the east to Nassau in the west, the princes, nobles, great civic magistrates, and leading ecclesiastics of Deutschland were there. Luther did not fully understand the motives that might guide Pope Leo in his balancings between French King and German Kaiser, but his mind was entirely made up that the day had gone by when the German nations ought to remain in spiritual tutelage to Italy. Next to his zeal for the

Gospel of grace, no feeling glowed within him so vehemently as his German patriotism, in protest against the domineering insolence of the South.

"God will be with me!" were the first words he uttered on descending from his waggon. Once in Worms—having manifested his confidence in the Imperial safe-conduct, and turned neither to the right nor to the left until he had obeyed the citation—he intimated to Glapio that he had no objection to enter into conference with him. The confessor replied that there would now be no use in an interview. By way of announcing further that he had come in no spirit of mutinous discontent with the services and usages of the Church, he went next morning, in his clerical capacity, to the sick-bed of John von Minkwitz, heard his confession, and administered to him the sacrament. At an early hour of the day Ulrich von Pappenheim, hereditary marshal of the Empire, cited him to appear, on that same afternoon, before the Diet.

The news of the summons flew through the town, and when the hour arrived the streets were thronged with eager multitudes. Ulrich von Pappenheim and Caspar Sturm, who arrived to conduct him to the Diet, felt themselves compelled to seek privacy by passing through the gardens of the Knights of St. John and penetrating to the Diet by back streets. They were but partially able, however, to evade the rush of the crowd, which clambered to the house-roofs, with intentions the reverse of diabolical, to catch a glimpse of Doctor Luther.

On one thing the Papal party, and Charles under their influence, were inflexibly determined, namely, that the accused should not have a full, free, and fair hearing. This had been accorded to Aleandro, but even his splendid oration, and the unquestionably great impression produced by it, could not man their hearts to a frank encounter with the monk of Wittenberg. This was what Luther solemnly demanded; this was what, in the name of truth, which is no Pope's perquisite, no Kaiser's property, he, in the loyalty of his heart to God, to humanity, to his German kindred, unspeakably yearned for. "Hear me out; answer me frankly; then burn me like Huss, if you will!" Such was, in effect, his cry. It was exactly what they would *not* assent to. Clearly, however, in sealing his lips, his Papal adversaries paid him a weighty compliment. Melanchthon, who had assisted him at Leipzig, was no longer present. He stood alone. The Kaiser had at command all the theological learning and dialectical skill of the Papacy. Aleandro was not only a brilliant but a judicious and prevailing orator. But his adversaries shrank from the encounter. The Achilles voice, which had been ringing in the air for three years, chilled every heart in the Papal Troy. Their plan was to insist that he ought to be treated as condemned already. The Holy Father had pronounced him a pestilent heretic. His books had been condemned to the fire. All the world knew that he had written the books. Let that knowledge be put in legal form into the possession of the Diet. Let him then be asked whether he will recant. If he replies in

the affirmative he will disappoint the expectations of the people, he will lose the trust of his friends, he will become *une quantité négligeable*. If he refuses to recant he will stand formally convicted as a heretic. Such was the scheme of Aleandro and his associates—Ahitophel could not have devised a wiser.

Introduced into the Diet by the marshal and the herald, Luther was first of all admonished to answer the questions addressed to him, but to say no more. John Eck—not our old friend of the Leipzig disputation, but a functionary of the Diet—next called upon him to answer two questions: whether the books which lay exposed before the Diet had been written by him, and whether he was prepared to recant them. The vigilant lawyer whom Frederick had instructed to keep an eye on the Doctor's interests, insisted that the titles of the books should be read aloud. Luther acknowledged, *sans phrase*, that they were his. His reply to the second question was a request for time for consideration. The question, he said, bore upon faith and the salvation of the soul, and upon the Word of God, supreme in heaven and on earth. In these circumstances it was presumptuous to say anything without deep reflection. Were he to dispose of the question on the spur of the moment he might easily say more or less than truth required, and, in the one way or the other, fail to confess Christ before men, and so incur the penalty of not being confessed by Him before His Father in heaven. He, therefore, humbly begged for time, lest he should dishonour the Word of God or injure his own soul.

There was in this no flinching, no surrender; but his conduct is wholly inconsistent with the hypothesis that he faced the Diet in an impetuously arrogant and foolhardy manner. His physical powers, his nervous system, seem to have somewhat collapsed in the sudden blaze of Imperial and princely presence, and in the consciousness—terrible to the boldest heart—of standing alone against power so overwhelming. There is credible testimony that he spoke with bated breath, in a kind of amazed bewilderment. The impression which he made upon Charles was not favourable. "*That* is not the man who would ever make a heretic of me," said the Kaiser. He emphasised his disparagement of Luther's personal appearance by expressing a conviction that he could not be the author of the books attributed to him.

After brief conference, the Kaiser and Diet resolved to grant the request for time. A few of the more fiery zealots of the Popish party wished to end the matter at once, but they were overruled. John Eck announced to Luther that Charles, in the plenitude of his graciousness, granted him one day for consideration. He was then to give his answer, but not in the form of a written dissertation; it must be by word of mouth.

And so, under escort of herald and marshal, he withdrew to his place of abode. The streets were thronged, and there were signs of storm in the movements of the crowd. Some stout and valiant men, of knightly order, seeing him in charge of the officials of the Diet, whispered, "What is this, Doctor? Are they taking you to prison? Are they to make a murdering matter

of it? If so, we shall sell our lives for yours." "And they would have done it, too," said Luther, referring to the circumstance many years afterwards. But a word and a smile quieted these ardent friends. He reached the hotel of the Knights of St. John in safety.

He would rest for a few minutes, probably take some refreshment; what we know for certain is, that he promptly took pen in hand and wrote one of those brief notes which were characteristic of the man. It still survives, and is a light-point which enables us to realise his state of mind at this critical moment. He had already formed the personal acquaintance, in Worms, of a brother of John Cuspinian, of Vienna, Imperial councillor and librarian, which brother had trumpeted the praises of Cuspinian, and doubtless proclaimed his friendliness to Luther's cause. On this hint he writes: "My knowledge of your kindness, most celebrated Cuspinian, lightly moves me to write you from the midst of the tumult raging round me, having before now wished, from the celebrity of your name, to become familiarly known to you. Put me down, therefore, in the list of your personal acquaintances, in order that I may have experimental proof of the justice of those praises which your brother has sung so loudly.

"Within the hour I have stood before the Roman Cæsar and his brother, and been interrogated as to my willingness to recant my books. I replied that the books were mine; but as for recantation, that I would answer on the morrow, so much of time having been asked and granted for deliberation. But, on the second

time of asking, I will, if Christ is propitious to me, revoke not one syllable." *

At four o'clock on the 18th of April he was again in the ante-room of the Diet. Here, with what seems studied disrespect, he was kept waiting for two hours amid bustling throngs. At about six in the evening he was admitted. The Diet was very full. John Eck now put the question as to recantation in a form which, if Luther had been disposed either to evasion or compromise, would have made such a course smooth for him. "Are you prepared to adhere to all that is contained in the books you have admitted to be yours, or is there anything you would recall?"

Markedly respectful to the Diet—going so far, even, as to bend the knee slightly—Luther spoke in clear and loud voice, making himself heard in every part of the hall. The Frankfort ambassador, who is our authority for his flutter on the former day, has recorded that he now spoke with unwavering intrepidity.

In his books he distinguished three classes. The first comprised those of a devotional, non-controversial kind. Of them nothing required to be said. They were admitted to be sound and profitable. The second consisted of those which were pointed against the Papacy, as injurious to the souls, and as consuming the temporal possessions, of men. Experience and universal complaint demonstrated that there was much to be advanced on this head. If he repudiated his attacks upon such evils, he would do his best to promote them,

* De Wette, 310.

especially when he was known to recant under the authority of the Kaiser and of the whole Roman Empire. "Oh, Heavens!" he cried, "what an infamous cloak should I, in that case, be for wickedness and tyranny!" The third division of his books was occupied with answers to persons who had undertaken to defend the Romish tyranny, and to subvert the gospel of salvation which he had taught. These, he owned, were defaced by an excess of vehemence. He made no claim to be a saint. But neither could he recant these writings, for in so doing he might seem to withdraw censure from the bad principles and the false arguments they refuted.

Quoting the words of Christ, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil," he begged that he might have his mistakes pointed out to him. Let the Kaiser, the princes, or whoever was capable, convince him from the writings of the prophets and apostles that he was wrong, and he should be willing not only to recant his books but to cast them into the fire. That danger, division, uproar, might arise from the proclamation of his doctrines, he could not deny. He had been reminded of the fact on the previous day, and he had earnestly considered it. But he was not daunted. Rather was he stimulated and gladdened by the prospect this opened up, such having always been the course of the Word of God. "I am not come," Christ had said, "to bring peace, but a sword, to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother." It was for the Diet, pondering the wonderful and terrible judgments of God,

to beware of adopting measures which, for the sake of peace, might proscribe truth, and thus open the floodgates to a deluge of intolerable evils. It was for the Diet to see to it that calamity was not thus brought upon the reign of the young and noble Charles, upon whom, next to God, hung their hopes. He concluded with a word or two of modest apology for addressing exhortation to so distinguished an audience. His duty to his country constrained him.

Framed though it was in accordance with the externals of respect and courtesy, this answer not unnaturally produced upon the Emperor and his counsellors an impression of impatience, irritation, and surprise. Luther seemed to speak as if *he* were the impeaching and rebuking party. After some deliberation with the princes, Charles gave fresh instructions to Eck, who again addressed himself to the monk, now in a tone of reprimand. Luther had spoken, said Eck, presumptuously and irrelevantly, instead of giving a precise answer to a definite question. His opinions having already been condemned when held by the heretic Huss, he possessed no right to have them submitted to further investigation. It was for him to acknowledge that God could not have left the Church to fall into error for so many centuries. If everyone who gainsaid the decisions of Church and Council was to be argumentatively silenced, what end could there be of disputation, what certitude could be attained by Christian men? Let him but repudiate those of his views which the Council of Constance had condemned, and the Kaiser might deal tenderly with

the others; whereas, if he persisted in his errors, even those parts of his books which were unto edification would be made of none effect. A plain reply, "without teeth or horns," was demanded. Would he or would he not recant those obnoxious articles?

The critical moment had arrived; the question put by the spokesman of the Diet was decisive. A golden bridge was laid down by it for Luther; a flowery path of distinction and emolument was practically offered him. To realise his situation we must vividly apprehend the *slightness* of the concession he was required to make. Eck, at Leipzig, be it recollected, had declared his willingness to accept, to all lengths and breadths, the doctrine of the omnipotence of grace, and to abjure, with all emphasis, the Pelagian theory of human merit. Of Glapio, Aleandro, and Charles himself, it may be confidently stated that they had no mind to refuse toleration to Luther's high Augustinian doctrine. In point of fact, the Council of Trent itself, though its object was to check the Reformation, left this point in obscurity, and it was fiercely debated, within the Church of Rome, in succeeding times, between Jansenists and Molinists. All would be forgiven Luther, and recognition would be vouchsafed to his genius and reforming zeal—for it were grossly unjust to Charles and his advisers to deny them the credit of honestly desiring reformation—if he would but make the *amende honorable* to the Pope, disown the peccant utterances which connected him with Huss and Wickliffe, and bow to the authority of the Roman See.

Why should he not? This was the question which, for two hours, with smiles and frowns, menace tempered by invitation, blandishment cunningly involved with reprimand, the counsellors of Charles and the official spokesman of the Diet continued to press upon Luther. Imagination, working on somewhat scanty materials, can dimly body forth the scene, held, not unwarrantably, to be the greatest in modern history. In presence of his Kaiser, whom he loved and honoured, and seeing near Charles his own sovereign, Prince Frederick, whom he knew to yearn inexpressibly for conciliation and an end of these dissensions, Luther could not but feel the stress of the temptation to yield. One word of submission from his lips—one look in his eyes of amiable and obsequious acquiescence in the plans of Charles—one whisper of confession that he had spoken unadvisedly of the Pope —would have made the Emperor his patron, and the Papal Nuncio his friend. Duke George, his inveterate opponent, and Joachim, Elector of Brandenburgh, who was obstinately hostile, would, at worst, have gloomed sullenly in the background. The Prince-Archbishop, the bland and pompous Albert, would have been eloquent in praise. Frederick, with perhaps the least little touch of misgiving, would have been kind and glad. Luther was deeply agitated. In the glare of the torches we can see the beads of sweat gather on his brow. But no subtlety of plausible self-deception—no adroit hocus-pocus of the intellect, obliterating the line between truth and falsehood, between life and death, and teaching conscience to equivocate—moved him from his stead-

fastness. In the first place, he profoundly distrusted the professions of the Papal party on the subject of omnipotent, sovereign grace. In the second place, he was unalterably convinced that, apart from all doctrinal considerations, the yoke of the Papacy ought to be broken from the neck of Christendom. He had absolutely no doubt that the claim of the Roman See to declare the meaning of Scripture, and to exercise dominion over the human spirit, was contrary to the purpose of Christ, and of deadly influence upon mankind. He knew also that Councils had erred. To say, therefore, that there is upon earth any person, Church, tribunal, court, or conclave which can infallibly define truth, was to lie. Accordingly his declinature to recant was comprehensive: "Unless I am refuted by the testimony of Holy Writ, or by clear and manifest grounds and reasons, unless the Scriptures I have adduced are proved to be irrelevant, and my conscience is thus placed in harmony with the Word of God, I can and will recant nothing. For it is neither safe nor well-advised to do aught against conscience. Here I stand. I can no other. God be my help!"

There has been much dispute as to the precise words used by Luther on this occasion, dispute as futile and foolish as that of the pedants who debate whether, in ordering the decisive charge at Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington, uttered the words, "Up, guards, and at them!" The essential and unquestionable fact is that Luther refused to recant, and declined the jurisdiction of the Pope, setting his face as a flint against the most

insinuating and plausible offers of compromise. "I am ready to die," he in effect said. "Kill me if you dare. I shall carry my appeal to the court of God; but I can own the authority of no earthly power to dictate law to conscience." Had he said less than this, he might have been the means of inaugurating a period of much theological disputation within the Church of Rome, and of pruning various abuses in worship and discipline. But he would not have broken the chains of Christendom, or started the magnificent procession of the Protestant nations, and introduced a new era of mental activity, industrial energy, political expansion, and universal progress.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DEPARTURE.

"It is past! It is past!" * said Luther, in heart-wrung accents, clasping his hands and raising them above his head, when he entered his hotel. Spalatin and other friends soon came in to congratulate him. A servant entered with a silver tankard of Eimbeck beer, which old Duke Eric of Brunswick, observing his fatigue, had sent him, having himself first tasted the contents. Luther drank, and said: "As Duke Eric has remembered me this day, may the Lord Christ remember him in his last hour." Tradition adds that Duke Eric, when he came to die, bethought him of the words, and those about his bed read from the Gospel: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Frederick was not ill-pleased with the appearance that had been made by his Doctor, and Charles murmured some acknowledgment that the monk had acquitted himself with courage and steadfastness. But the hold which Aleandro and the Papal party had obtained on the Imperial mind was not shaken. Next day, in a

* "*Ich bin durch! Ich bin durch!*"

message to the Diet, written with his own hand, Charles announced his decision.

His ancestors—emperors, kings, archdukes, and the rest—had all, he said, from cradle to grave, been loyal to the Roman See. In the steps of those illustrious fathers it was his part to tread. The decrees of the holy Council of Constance, and of other Councils, he was determined to maintain. A solitary monk presumed to raise his judgment against that of unanimous Christendom. He, Charles, was prepared to sacrifice empire, friends, body, soul, rather than let this evil spread. Yesterday the obstinate reply of Martin Luther had been heard by the Diet. Too much delay—it pained the Imperial heart to think of it—had occurred already in proceeding against him. He was now to return to his home according to the tenor of the safe-conduct, not preaching by the way. Thereafter he was to be dealt with as a manifest heretic. In all this, Charles invoked the support of the members of the Diet, as beseemed good and faithful Christians.

On Friday, the 19th of April, the Imperial message was delivered to the Diet. It was not received with the acclamations which Charles and the Nuncio may have hoped for. The Germans did not quite like the high-pacing, autocratic demeanour of their young Kaiser. Still less, one can well understand, would they be charmed by the smirking satisfaction of Glapio and the beaming approval of Aleandro. There were a few Germans, no doubt, who would have outdone Charles himself in hostility to Luther. Joachim of Branden-

burgh, and Duke George, would have dealt with him as the Council of Constance dealt with Huss. But even these were not disposed to see Germany made a pasturing ground for Italian ecclesiastics. George in particular was clamorous on the subject of German grievances. And the general sentiment of the Diet was overwhelmingly opposed to the ultra-Papists. Even Aleandro and Glapio did not deceive themselves so far as to suppose that complete victory was within their grasp. A large party, including all moderate men, with Frederick of Saxony, Lewis of the Palatinate, and the boyish Philip of Hesse, in its foremost ranks, and with which Archbishop Albert was content to act, pleaded the cause of Luther both in the Diet and in the immediate circle of the Emperor. Charles was with difficulty prevailed upon to modify the terms of his safe-conduct in such manner as would leave three clear days for further negotiations.

With immense labour, with true German patience, with a skill which the Doctor, a veteran disputant, could and did appreciate, the worthy Princes tried to persuade him to make submission to the Pope and the Emperor. They called to their aid the most persuasive Popish theologian discoverable—one Wehe; Luther witnessed to his extreme skill as a dialectical pleader, declaring that the Goliath of the Leipzig disputation was not worthy to hold a candle to him. In pitched argumentative battle, in warm post-prandial colloquy, day after day, now on this tack, now on that, the Papists and the moderate reformers exhausted invention in attempts to make Luther yield. Why endeavour to trace their manœuvres,

or name the alternations of their strategy and tactics? He remained immovable.

All the world has admired his intrepidity in standing firm in the presence of Charles. The lucidity of his intellect, the soundness of his judgment, and the firmness of his resolution, receive further illustration from his declinature of all compromise when those well-meaning friends of his urged it upon him. At the end of their endeavours, they were precisely at the point at which they had begun. He would not recant. They dared not undertake to refute him. They would not give him up to the Pope. He believed himself commissioned by God to preach salvation by grace and to denounce Antichrist. In that work he would persevere—to do less, he was absolutely sure, would be the death, the eternal death, of his soul. He had virtually told the Emperor and the Diet that it was their duty to co-operate with him in his work. Short of this, the course he advised them to pursue—the best under the circumstances—was to treat his enterprise as Gamaliel had advised the Jews to treat that of the Apostles. "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."

The days of grace being expired, he was finally commanded to quit Worms under the safe-conduct, the Emperor reserving it to himself to adopt such measures against him as became a maintainer of the Catholic faith. Luther did not complain of the way in which he had been treated. "Be it so," he exclaimed, on hearing the command to depart; "Blessed be the name of the

Lord! I have desired nothing but a reformation of the Church in accordance with Holy Writ. Compatibly with this, I would bear anything for his Imperial Majesty and the Empire—life, death, fame, infamy, gain, loss; but the Word of God must not be bound. I must assert my freedom to own and proclaim it, without reservation. I most humbly commend me, and declare my submission, to his Imperial Majesty and the States of the Empire." On the 26th of April, at ten in the morning, escorted by horsemen and gazed upon by crowds, as when he had entered, he left Worms.

Two days later, he makes some brief pause at Frankfort. Here, with two strokes of his pen, in a letter to his friend Lucas Cranach, he gives an abstract of his experiences at the Diet. "'Are these books yours?' 'Yes.' 'Will you recant them?' 'No.' 'Then be off!'"* Luther understood historical perspective!

We have two other letters from his pen written on the same day but dated from Friedberg, the one in Latin to Charles, the other in German to the electors, princes, and estates of the Empire. In both he expresses himself in terms of grateful acknowledgment for the treatment he had received at the Diet, and reiterates a profession of his willingness to submit in all senses which will leave unimpaired his prior submission to the Word of God. "This, being above all things, ought, as Paul teaches, to be itself in the highest possible degree free and devoid of trammels." With a touch of penetrating insight he points out that, if God's Word

* De Wette, 311.

be supreme, it is no true exercise of the virtues of humility and obedience to submit to those who enjoin infraction of its authority. "It is never left to the choice of man to subject himself to the danger of breaking the Divine Law, to what extent soever the greatness, the multitude, the learning, the sanctity, of those who urge this subjection upon him may transcend and overbalance his own powers." How marvellously complete, how exquisitely apt and pointed, is this defence, by anticipation, of what has so often been deemed the towering pride and insolent presumption of Protestants in declining to submit to *impositions*, regal, ecclesiastical, or Parliamentary, which restrained their liberty to obey the Word of God!

With seer-like earnestness, not untempered by affection and loyalty, he sets forth to Charles his conception of the intensely *personal* nature of the relations between man and his Maker. We owe more to God than we can owe to man, the interests involved in the one case being but temporal, in the other eternal. We may take the spoiling of our goods with patience—we may even (the Kaiser must have been dull if he did not find this suggested by Luther's words) give our bodies to be burnt—so much may be due from subject to sovereign, so far may one go without sin. "But in relation to the Word of God and his own eternal weal, God does not permit man to incur peril out of deference to man. To Himself, and to Himself alone, He means all men and all things to be in the last resort subjected, inasmuch as He alone has the glory of truth, and is the truth, but every

man a liar, as Paul, in the third of Romans, most excellently discourses. Nor is that strange (*nec id injuria*), for it is in this faith and submission that essential (*vera*) adoration of God consists, as St. Augustine in his Enchiridion teaches." * His letter to the Diet, though not a literal translation into German of the letter to the Emperor, is entirely coincident with it in sentiment, and closely resembles it in expression. In both letters he professes the utmost willingness to submit his doctrines and his books to judges above suspicion, erudite, free, as well laymen as ecclesiastics, and to "sustain and accept" their decision, reserving only his appeal to the Word of God.

What he says to Charles of that essential worship which it is idolatry to offer to any creature, casts a significant light on his view of faith—bringing out its unity. For Luther, faith, the organ of apprehension between man and God, itself the work of God and turning all work of man from mechanical effort into living growth, had many applications to one result. Historically, it was the believing ear, Divinely opened, in the case of Abraham, of Moses, of Isaiah, of Paul, of Augustine, of himself, to the Voice of the Eternal. Rationally, it was the basis of all doctrinal system, and the key—better than learning or logical acuteness—to the records in which, by means of inspiration, the utterances of the Voice had been enshrined. He affirmed also that it afforded the ultimate ground of appeal in the exercise of discipline by the Church. We are not

* De Wette, 312.

to suppose him so ignorant and inexperienced as to imagine that any tribunal, court, committee, conclave, or even company of friends met to judge a friend, can be justly required to convince the person judged. The model of Christian discipline, as presented in the Epistle to Titus—the "speaking away," after first and second admonition, of the "heretic"—a model expressly accepted by Luther, does not involve the convincing of the accused. What Luther meant was that, if he was to submit to the judgment of Kaiser, Pope, or Diet, in the sense of owning it just, he must be convinced from Scripture; otherwise he would indeed, without hesitation, lay down his life, but would also, as has been said, carry his appeal to the throne of God. From the nature of the law which both parties accepted, this was a cardinal point. A temporal code could be referred to the King who issued it, to the Legislature that composed it; but the law of God was spiritual, and the Court of ultimate appeal against sentences pronounced by its authority was in heaven. The judge, therefore, or tribunal, that sentenced the heretic, acted under the consciousness that a writ of error might be entered in heaven's chancery, and the condemned heretic be pronounced a martyr: hence the curious rule of the Inquisition that no heretic should be put to death till he confessed his heresy. Luther denied that he was a heretic. He alleged that he spoke the one, simple, eternal truth, which the schoolmen had obscured, which the Papacy had betrayed. He was mighty in the Scriptures, mightier than the plausible Aleandro, mightier

than all the Doctors of Cologne, of Louvain, of Paris. Even Pope Leo, though now cordially detesting him, would have much preferred hushing up his affair to burning him. The princes and estates of Germany, with the exception of a furious zealot here and there, dared not see the smoke of his burning ascend to heaven in appeal against his executioners. The smoke from the pyre of Huss was now dimly suspected by many to have been no acceptable incense, but to have rolled back on Sigismund and on Germany in wrath and calamity.

Luther was, on the whole, favourably impressed by Charles. The solidity and integrity; the sincere though unenthusiastic wish to do the just and right thing, according to his light; the slow, ruminant, but not inconsiderable ability, of the young Emperor, commended him to the loyal Doctor. Taciturn, meditative, doing nothing on impulse, proceeding always with a staid and chastened dignity, he interested Luther by the contrast presented to himself. "He speaks less," said Martin, whose talk was an ever-flowing river, "in a year than I do in a day."

Frederick of Saxony, constitutionally fond of peace, and worn out physically by the strain of the Diet, though staunch to Luther, was devoutly anxious that his volcanic energies should be sealed up for a time. Not improbably a few confidential words, a few significant glances, passed between the Kaiser and the Elector on the subject of the irrepressible Doctor. Charles and Frederick had a good deal in common. Both were thoughtful

and taciturn; both were sagacious, both in their way religious; both came trailing clouds of mediæval haze into the wide-awake sixteenth century; both fell short of the intensity, intrepidity, faith, hope, and velocity of genius. "Really, your Electoral Highness, we must do something to moderate this alarming swell in the public mind. Unless you can get your wild man quieted, I shall be obliged to let him feel my hand in a way you may dislike." Frederick would not take such a speech from Charles in bad part. The phenomenon of the prophet-monk had dazzled and terrified him by its lightning-splendour. He distrusted himself too profoundly to be able to trust Luther wholly. He had indeed bowed his head in reverence when Luther appealed to the Word of God, and he recoiled in startled horror from the thought that if God indeed spake by the Doctor, he, Frederick, should leave him to perish. Accordingly, before Martin took his departure, the Elector and a few others of those friends who had most strenuously promoted his interest, represented to him the absolute necessity of some constraint being put upon his freedom. He was sharply annoyed by the idea; felt that he would prefer to fall a victim at once to the frenzied hostility of Duke George and the zealots; but felt also that he could not treat with disrespect the advice of these good souls.* When, therefore, after writing to the Emperor and the Diet from Friedberg, he proceeded on his journey, he was prepared for adventures.

* Letter to Cranach. De Wette, 311.

## CHAPTER VI.

### IN THE FOREST.

Luther's appearance at Worms had not tended to lower him in the estimation of his countrymen. As he proceeded on his homeward way, he received almost princely honours. On the 13th of April, on approaching Hirschfeld, in the territory of the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, he was met by the Chancellor and Treasurer of the Prince Abbot of the place, accompanied by a large military escort. Nearer to the town the Abbot himself, at the head of a cavalcade of knights, made his appearance. Within the gates, the Senate awaited him. The party were sumptuously entertained by the Abbot, who left his own bed that it might be occupied by Luther. Next morning this bold prelate insisted that his guest should preach. Luther at first resisted the proposal, urging that the Abbot might draw down on himself the vengeance of his superiors, and recalling the injunction to forbear from preaching which Charles had imposed when permitting him to depart under shelter of the safe-conduct. The consideration of his own danger had no effect upon the Abbot; and Luther explained what looked too like the breach of an engagement on his part, by saying that he had not consented to the binding of the Word of God.

From Hirschfeld he went on to Eisenach. Here again he preached, but now under formal notarial protest by the incumbent of the church, who, however, humbly excused himself on the plea of necessity. Luther was conscious that he might be accused of breaking his word, and in a letter to Albert, Count of Mansfeld,* we have his reply to the anticipated charge. "They bound me," he wrote to Count Albert, in allusion to what took place at Worms, "not to preach or write on the way. I said: 'I will do the whole pleasure of the Kaiser, but I will leave the Word of God unbound.'" The reservation, having been openly made, afforded adequate defence.

At Eisenach the Luther party broke up. Some of the friends who had accompanied him so far bade him farewell, and proceeded onwards in the direction of Wittenberg. He himself, with Amsdorf and the Augustinian brother who had been with him all along, turned southward to Möhra, penetrating the skirt of the Thuringian wood in the neighbourhood of Eisenach, and reaching the moorland hamlet in and around which clustered the Luther kindred. In the deep seclusion and rusticity of Möhra he passed one whole day in friendly converse with his relatives, a thing in which, we may be sure, he took great delight after the agitations of the last three weeks. Of his intercourse with his uncles and cousins on this occasion we have no details, but we need not doubt that he bestowed upon one or two of them whom he could trust, such information respecting

* De Wette, 315.

the sequel as should enable them, without being too precise, to allay by judicious hints and nods any anxiety that might arise touching the fate of their kinsman.

On Saturday, the 4th of May, he once more set his face towards Wittenberg, moving eastward through the Thuringian forest. A few of his nearest relatives gave him convoy for some way, but as the grey tower of Altenstein Castle began to be seen by glimpses through the trees, they took their leave. In the waggon which the Wittenberg town-counsellors had provided for him, with Amsdorf and the Augustinian brother, Petsensteiner, by his side, he once more fared onwards. A look of somewhat unusual consciousness, with nervous alertness and searching glances into every woodland glen and shadowed hollow bordering their path, might have been detected in Amsdorf, and Luther fidgeted probably beyond his wont; but the driver was not less listless than on other days, and the simple friar feared no evil. Suddenly, when they were approaching the crag of Altenstein, and the ruins of Glisbach church were near at hand, five horsemen, two of them wearing masks, flashed into sight and barred their way. Petsensteiner, obedient to the instinct of self-preservation, leaped from the waggon and made off through the wood, not looking behind him but pushing on for Waltershausen, which he reached on foot in the evening. The waggoner was flung roughly upon the earth, Amsdorf was overpowered, and Luther was seized. Some buffets appear to have been administered to the driver as he lay on the ground, but one trusts that they did not involve more than

pantomime discomfort. The object of the assailants plainly was Luther. He was hurried some way into the wood and mounted on a horse that stood ready to receive him. Amsdorf and the waggoner were then released, and permitted to pursue their journey.

The horsemen galloped off with Luther, after first disguising him in knightly habiliments, into the depths of the forest. After many doublings and windings, in the course of which, being thoroughly tired, he stopped to rest beside a fountain that still bears his name, they led him, at about eleven at night, to the castle of the Wartburg, placed on its lofty rock above the town of Eisenach. The masked leaders of the armed men who effected his seizure were Burkhard von Hund, of Altenstein, and John von Berlepsch, governor of the Wartburg. The business, first and last, had been managed with singular felicity, Luther's preliminary visit to his relations being admirably fitted to obviate extremities of alarm and anger among the people. A whisper that it was the Papists who were baffled could thus be put into circulation without disclosure of his place of retreat. Aleandro felt that he had been outgeneralled. "It is the Saxon fox!" he signalled to Rome, perceiving in the affair the wary hand of Frederick. Luther had been well served by his friends. And the Elector—with a prophet and a Pope upon his hands, not to mention an Emperor—was perhaps not much more comforted by the thought that Luther was safe, than by the hope that he would at last, for some time, leave off thundering.

# Book X.

## THE WARTBURG.

1521.

# Book X.

## THE WARTBURG.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### AMONG THE BIRDS.

Rest, then, at last. The long slow climb, zigzag by zigzag, up the Wartburg, lofty and steep, in the dark night, is at an end, and the panting horses stand at the gate of the castle. The honest knight, Berlepsch, who holds the place for Frederick, helps his prisoner, whom he treats with all honour and tenderness, to dismount, leads him up the stone steps, and conducts him to his room. It is low and of small compass; a tenant farmer in our days would think it a poor sitting-room; but for Luther, accustomed to the narrowness of a cell, it was perfectly commodious. Prayer was a perpetual habit of his, and we may be sure that, before casting himself on his bed, he roused all his faculties into vivid wakefulness to pour out his soul in fervent communion with God. We may trust that thereafter sleep, profound and dreamless, descended swiftly upon him, and continued to hold him enthralled until the May morning had flooded with light the slopes and crags of the Wartburg.

He would feel it strange but not unpleasant when he awoke. He knew well where he was. The touch of the sunlight would recall to him the sweetest hours of his boyhood. The Wartburg stands in a region which, beyond all others, was clothed in bright hues for his imagination and heart. Eisenach, clustered at the foot of the Wartburg, was his "dear town," where first he had known the charm of cultured intercourse, and where first his eye had been struck by the beauty of landscape. When he threw open the lattice and looked through his little window, he saw, below the castle battlements, fringing the ledges of precipitous crags and shadowy chasms, the loveliest green and golden luxuriance of foliage stooping into the valley, while on the opposite side were wooded hills, and beyond these, bounding the horizon, the faint blue of distant mountains. If there was a spot in all Germany which Martin would have fixed upon as the scene of an indispensable internment, it was here.

Behold him, then, transformed. The monkish habiliments have been swept into the background; his beard and hair are permitted to grow as nature wills. In knightly costume, with sword on thigh, adopting the *alias* of Squire George, he adjusts himself to his new situation. Here, in the profound stillness, he can ponder the situation, reviewing his own past and present, sending his thoughts to Wittenberg and Rome, and considering what the hours will bring. His age—thirty-seven—is one at which the dynamic energy of man is at its utmost; and he has now, with deliberate

purpose and inexpugnable resolution, announced to the Kaiser and Princes of Germany, and through them to the world, that he will not recede a foot's breadth in his battle with the Papacy, refusing to acknowledge its jurisdiction and arraigning it as a usurping, tyrannical power from which all Christians ought to appeal to the Word of God. He is not without the tools of his trade, the enginery with which, insignificant as it looks, his spirit can act on the spirits of men. Pen, ink, and paper are not forbidden him. He has a stout oaken chair, a sufficient table, a footstool curiously enough consisting of a vertebra, transformed into rock, of some "dragon of the prime."

His first letter is to the man whom, of all others, he most deeply loves and most highly reveres, Melanchthon. It is dated the 12th of May. "What are you about, all this time, my Philip? Are you praying for me that this fine adventure of mine, which I reluctantly assented to, may be to the glory of God? I should much like to know how the thing pleases you. I had my fears that I might seem to be deserting in the hour of battle; and yet there was no way to resist those people, with their wishes and their advices. I desire nothing more heartily than to engage in a throttling grapple with the furious adversaries.

"Sitting here, I place before my eyes, all day, the face of the Church, and those words of the eighty-eighth Psalm occur to me: *Hast thou made all men in vain?* My God! What a horrible spectacle of the Divine wrath is that abominable reign of the Roman Anti-

christ! I detest my own hardness in that I am not wholly melted into tears, not shedding fountains of tears, for the slain of my people. And there is none to arise and hold God (*surgat et teneat Deum*), or oppose himself as a wall for the house of Israel, in this the latest day of His wrath. O kingdom of the Pope, worthy of the end and dregs of the ages! God pity us!

"Wherefore be thou, in the meantime, instant in the ministry of the Word. Strengthen the walls and the turrets of Jerusalem until the enemy are upon thee. Recognise thy call and thy gifts. I pray for thee as for none other—*unice*—if my prayer (as I do not doubt) avail aught. Pray for me in turn, and let us jointly bear this burden. We alone hitherto stand in the line of battle; they will seek your life after mine." *

He has had a letter, he proceeds to say, from Spalatin, who tells him that a fierce edict is on the anvil against him; but he betrays no symptom of fear. His spirit bears up bravely. His station on the Wartburg he describes as "in the region of the birds," a little touch, occurring as he drops the pen, which stands for a good deal. He was not the man to anticipate Rousseau in the cultivation of the sentimental picturesque; but he loved nature and the open air; had an ear for the birds, and an eye for the clouds. This was the lyric element in his mind, which found exercise also in his flute-playing, and which no earnestness of spirit or intensity of occupation could extinguish.

Having begun to write, he dashes off a few lines for

* De Wette, 316.

Amsdorf,* and a few more for Agricola,† an ardent theological ally. He bids Amsdorf tell him what took place after he—Luther—was snatched from him on their journey, and in particular what he heard or saw at Erfurth. This inquiry about Erfurth shows that Luther was becoming keenly interested in the progress of the Gospel there, and possibly that he had thought of the town as a resort in the event of his quitting Wittenberg. He dates, this time, "in the region of the air." The birds and the bright blue of the May sky, with white cloudlets sailing in it, evidently haunt his mind. In the letter to Agricola he says that he is a prisoner of an enigmatic kind, sitting there both willingly and unwillingly—willingly, because God appoints it; unwillingly, because he would choose rather to stand up for the Word in public, but has not been found worthy to do so. "Bestow my salutation," he proceeds, "on your family and your wife. The Lord grant that she may have a happy delivery!" After signing his name he throws in a postscript: "Give one of the enclosed gold pieces to your recently born daughter, and the other to the child-bearing mother, in order that she may take wine and have an abundant supply of milk." It may be doubted whether the whole range of the biography of world-historical men affords a more expressive instance of kindness and fellow-feeling than this. While the world lasts, St. Paul's prescription of wine to Timothy will furnish proof that the great apostle

* De Wette, 317. † De Wette, 318.

had a gentle nature. Luther, fiercer even than St. Paul in the controversial arena, penetrates in his tenderness to the most pathetic wants, not only of man but of woman.

On the fourteenth of the month, in a letter to Spalatin,* he refers to stirring news from Erfurth. One Severian, a notorious Papist of the place, had publicly and offensively excluded Master Draco from the choir, dragging him out by his dress. The reason assigned had been that Draco, having taken part in the festive reception of Luther into the town, was practically excommunicated. Whereupon the Erfurth students, fraternising with the town apprentices, rose against the priests, and assaulted their dwellings by night. Worse things are apprehended, the priests being in evil odour, the Senate trying to face both ways. The time may perhaps be at hand, suggests Luther, when the prophetic proverb assigning to Erfurth in Germany the part played by Prague in Bohemia will be fulfilled. Prague had been the scene of the labours of Huss and Jerome.

After applying to himself a phrase of hasty contempt, as if he were a lazy do-nothing, he gives details which prove him to have been very far from idle. He is reading the Greek and Hebrew Bible, writing a sermon in German on the liberty of auricular confession, and proposing to engage in other labours. He is so changed, he says, in his knightly vestments, and with his beard sprouting, that Spalatin would not know him.

* De Wette, 319.

Sensible of the joy of being in full Christian freedom, he would, nevertheless, have preferred, had God willed it, to meet death by preaching openly in defiance of the obdurate zealot of Dresden.* It may be noted that, while sending salutations to "the court" generally, he has no special message for Frederick. It is not by any means with effusive gratitude that he reflects upon the care with which the Elector has provided for his safety.

The tone of his letters to Melanchthon is always cordial, and they reveal his state of mind—reflect, indeed, every varying colour of his moods—with the verisimilitude of perfect confidence, perfect friendship. At one moment he is cast down—oppressed with a sense of the Divine anger—ready to believe that God has forsaken the cause, and that no adults but only infants will be saved in this evil generation. He says that he wishes no one to be solicitous about him. Personally he is well off, but his mind is heavy, his spirit bowed. In view of the glory of the Word, and the mutual confirmation of himself and others, he would "rather lie burning upon live coals than thus, in a state of semi-animation," drag on existence. But a consoling thought occurs to him. Who knows but Christ may promote His own cause by these events? So often had they talked of the faith and the hope with which clouded providences ought to be regarded; and now when a thing had fallen out, not by their disposing but by God's, could they not for once trust the soundness of their own doctrine? "What if I perish? The Gospel will nowise

* Duke George.

perish. In evangelical matters you, Philip, now excel me, and, like Elisha, succeed Elias with double spirit, which may the Lord Jesus graciously impart to thee!" And so, from the pit of despondency, he rises quickly into the region of hope and joy. "Be not cast down, therefore, but sing the song of the Lord in the night. I too will sing in concert. Let our only care be for the Word." He refuses to believe that, since his departure, they have been straying at Wittenberg "without a pastor." This were of all tidings the saddest and bitterest. But while Melanchthon, Amsdorf, and others were there, they could not be without pastors. "Say not such things, lest God be angry, and we be found ungrateful. O how I wish that all churches, at least all collegiate churches, were provided with one quarter of the ministerial power you possess! Offer up thanks to God for having illuminated you." He ends the letter in a jocular tone, specifying a number of persons who are to be greeted in his name, including "the whole church in your house," with express exception of "fat Flemmichen," who is to have a letter to himself. And the address is in his brightest lyric manner: "Among the birds singing sweetly in the branches, and praising God day and night with all their strength."*

* De Wette, 321.

## CHAPTER II.

### SATANIC ANNOYANCES.

Echoes from the outer world found their way to Luther in his solitude, and he could not but be interested by the eager concern on his account manifested by the great body of the people throughout Germany. Some ardent Papist, he tells Spalatin, had written to the Cardinal of Mayence that, now they had their wish in putting Luther out of sight, it seemed likely, such was the commotion among the multitude, that they would be forced to light a candle and set about finding him again. In terms of counsel and encouragement he wrote to Franz von Sickingen: "Once I saw an insolent smoke-wreath that took upon itself to quench the sun, but the smoke vanished; the sun shone on."

The edict by which he was placed under the ban of the Empire, and exposed as a mark to be struck at by all men loyal to the Kaiser and the Church, had now been issued. It appeared on the twenty-eighth of May, but bore date the eighth of the month. Historically the document imports the joining of hands between the Emperor and the Pope, to arrange things according to their will throughout Germany and Europe. Leo—

Prince first, Pope second—had made up his mind that more was to be had, for the present, by allying himself with Charles than with his rival Francis. Charles, for his part, though he was probably not without some under-current of surmise that the truth might be on the side of Luther, had not the courage and originality requisite to give this surmise the force of a strong man's doubt. It was so difficult to discover whether Luther was supremely and imperatively right; and there was so much, on the head and front of it, to be said for Leo! If not in himself, then in his office, the Pope was one main pillar of respectability and fixed order in Europe. To prune abuses—to remove a glaring solecism here and there—to promote in a conventionally respectable way the general welfare—were objects of sincere purpose and endeavour to Charles. But the reformation of the Church by bringing to bear upon it the hot blast of Divine Truth was quite beyond the scope and compass of his ideas. Luther, hobnobbing with Aleandro, discussing with Cardinals and Archbishops this and that plausible proposal for mending matters, would have experienced his courteous consideration. To Frederick, to the good Archbishop of Treves, to honest Spalatin, to devout and dainty Staupitz, to all well-meaning mediocre souls, this appeared to be the right way of proceeding. But Luther knew that at the basis of such conference must lie a tacit agreement that the authority of the Pope, the divine right of the Papacy, should remain unimpaired, unchallenged; and to this he never could consent.

Charles made his choice. He declared for Leo and against Luther. The Pope let the Emperor have his own way with the Inquisition in Spain; and the Emperor hurled the Ban of the Empire against Luther. Well disposed as he was towards Charles, and not forgetting that he had been the prey of evil counsellors, Luther was stern in his condemnation of this proceeding. "It is nothing strange to me," he said, some six weeks later, "that Charles is struck by wars. Prosperity he will never have; the impiety of others will be visited upon him; because, unhappy young man, he repudiated truth to its face at Worms, in deference to evil counsellors. Germany too will be involved in his calamity, for it consented to the impiety. But the Lord will know His own." *

It was a terrible aggravation of the suffering inflicted upon Luther by his enforced seclusion in the Wartburg, that he underwent agonising pains from dyspepsia. The new mode of life disagreed with him. As a monk, he had fared in the simplest, meagrest manner. A herring and a little bread sufficed him for days. The rough abundance of a knight's table was for him luxury. At Wittenberg his life had been full of movement and bodily exercise, his constant preaching and lecturing, had there been nothing else, involving powerful action of lung and limb. In the Wartburg his occupations were sedentary. The result was distressing and dangerous dyspepsia, with paroxysms of pain, and collateral effects of sleeplessness and nervous

* De Wette, 328.

irritation. He bore his anguish with exemplary patience, never murmuring or desponding, but acknowledging, with pious gratitude, that the chastisement was in mercy. The contrast he presents to his far less grievously tormented admirer, Mr. Carlyle, in conquering his agonies and turning them to spiritual uses, is much to the disadvantage of the Chelsea sage.

After a few weeks he procured some alleviation of his disorder. Helpful Spalatin sent him pills that were of service, and the good knight of the Wartburg not only permitted him to preach to himself and a select few on high days,* but trusted him to wander in the woods, with one attendant, in search of wild strawberries. To the season of strawberries succeeded, in its order, the season of nuts; and there were always the rustling woods, the joyful birds, the sailing clouds, things endlessly interesting to Martin; and deep down in the valley, in the hottest summer day, the moss was amber-bright with dripping waters, and the air cool with leafy shade. He speaks of the kindness of his host, and was evidently, with his cordial, shrewd, familiar ways, a general favourite.

Let us not, however, suppose him to have been a saunterer except at rare intervals. He had nothing to do, in the sense that, if he had chosen to be idle, no one held him to work; but his self-appointed tasks kept him strenuously busy—*otiosissimus et negotiosissimus*, as he describes himself. He pushes on with his Greek and Hebrew, and writes "without intermission." He

* Matthesius.

had been engaged upon the *Magnificat* when summoned to Worms; he ordered the manuscript to be forwarded from Wittenberg, and promptly finished it. He composed a controversial treatise in reply to an adversary of the name of Latomus. Of exegetical and homiletical labours there was always enough on hand. And his studies were gradually converging towards a translation of the Greek Testament.

It would have been his happiness to expatiate in the Bible books. He grudged every moment given to controversy. But he was the most pugnacious of men; and out of controversy he could not and would not keep. Fiercely confident that his enemies were the enemies of God, he thought that it would be a sin if he were not angry. Emser, of Dresden, had withstood him at an early date, and was a prominent figure in that group of his enemies which clustered round Duke George. Emser, accordingly, was for him a God-forsaken reprobate, who had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and could no longer be lawfully prayed for. In a painful letter to Amsdorf, he assures the latter that the devil speaks in Emser as from a vase in which he sits as in his own proper vessel.* All his friends thought him too violent; and, as we have seen, he sometimes admitted as much.

But the horrors of controversy increased his delight in escaping from it to those writings which he felt to be full of that inspiration which throbbed in his own breast—the inspiration of entire submission to God,

* De Wette, 327, and in other letters.

entire acceptance of God's terms, entire immersion of the human in the Divine. Not that he thought the strife inimical to study, incompatible with edification. On the contrary, he held that it deepened his appreciation of Scripture. In conflict with men and devils, in labyrinthine wanderings through the dark places of his own heart, he found this advantage—it is his own testimony as delivered in the afternoon of life—that such experiences gave him new light in reading the Bible. His theology, he said, had not been learned all at once, but had been attained to after many an hour of struggle and search. In temptation, in tribulation, he had seen into the inner meaning of Scripture. The rabble of fanatics and sectarians had never known what it was to have their faith fought over with that grand controversialist the devil—*den rechten Widersprecher, nehmlich den Teufel.* That was a teacher to put a man through his facings. He, for his part, had had the Pope, the universities, the devil, to hunt him into those Bible fastnesses from which he might defy them. "If we have no devil to fight it out with, we become mere speculative theologians, who keep speculating, and going round and round with their notions and their reason, in the direction of nowhere, speculating as to whether it should be on this tack or on that other, as was much the way also with the maundering monks in their cloisters."*

Whatever Martin had to complain of on the Wartburg, it was not of a short supply of devil's-drill, to

* Tischreden. Förstemann, vol. xxii., p. 76; slightly paraphrased.

keep him straight in his theology. All the world has heard of his satanic buffetings in those months—his throwing the inkpot at the devil, and the like. This particular incident is indeed a myth. Luther makes no mention of the occurrence in his letters, and says nothing of it in any one of the numerous conversations on the subject of the devil which survive in the Table Talk. Matthesius gives no hint of it. It is, therefore, not literally authentic. But no better instance exists of a sound, vital, historical myth, a myth that is more expressively veracious than any one fact, because it is the embodied spirit of a thousand. If we should say that Luther's consistent and continual attitude towards Satan during his stay in the Wartburg was that of a man who, being confronted by the devil in actual presence, started up defiant and flung his inkstand at the spectre, the dramatic vividness of our statement would not misrepresent or exaggerate the truth. Luther indeed threw his inkstand at the devil; only he threw it, not once and one day, but every day, and all day long, during his abode in the Wartburg.

Readers must not suppose, however, that the devil fills a very considerable space in these letters. He had things of so much greater importance with which to concern himself, that he treats his personal vexations and worries from Satan as matters to be left in the background. This need not surprise us, for it is in conformity with one of his main instructions as to dealing with Satan, namely, to treat him with contempt.

He is a proud and sensitive though mean and malignant spirit, Luther says, and nothing irks him more than to make light of his pretensions and to mock at his mockeries of God. There are illustrations of the proper contempt with which devout men and women have treated Satan, given by Luther in the Table Talk, which would considerably astonish polite society, if that work were given to English readers with the completeness desiderated, in his innocence, by Mr. Froude. Luther himself told the devil to hold his tongue in quite untranslatable Billingsgate. More frequently his tone is that of ironical banter. But there is grim earnestness in his jocularity; and the drift and central current of his contention is that his accuser is a defamer of God and an enemy of man.

The meanness of satanic majesty accords well with the character of those annoyances by which Luther, in the Table Talk, describes himself as having been persecuted by the devil in the Wartburg. Two samples of these will suffice.

He had been presented with a sack of hazel-nuts, of which he ate some and locked away the remainder in a chest. At night, having extinguished the candle and laid himself on his bed, he became aware of an immense commotion being made among the nuts. They seemed to be flung at the rafters overhead, and rattled about him as he lay on his couch. Nevertheless he fell asleep. Presently he was awakened by a loud noise outside the door, as if scores of dishes were being flung downstairs. He knew that the entrance below was guarded

with bolts and chains of iron, and that no human being could be there. He rose, and went to see what was the matter. All was silent. The entrance to the stairs was secure. He now perceived that it was Satan, and, in pursuance of his usual method of contempt, exclaimed, "Oh, it is you! Well, who cares?" Having then commended himself to Christ, he returned to bed and slept undisturbed until morning. In our second instance, it was not Luther himself, but one who took a particular interest in him, that was visited by Satan. The secret of his presence in the Wartburg had been kept from the wife of John von Berlepsch, his host. At the time of his arrival she was not staying at the castle; but the rumour that Dr. Luther was her husband's prisoner-guest reached her, and she manifested an irresistible curiosity to see him. They were forced to turn Luther out of his room to accommodate her, and she occupied his bed. During the night such a noise and disturbance arose in her chamber that it seemed to be peopled by a thousand devils.*

It is no extravagant hypothesis that some persons about the Wartburg in 1521 may have had reasons of their own for wishing to make the place too hot for Martin Luther. That the governor's wife was subjected to the same kind of nightly annoyance as the Doctor may possibly mean that the eye of a lady, as well as that of an austere prophet, was unpleasant for some inmates of the Wartburg. It has been said that he was a favourite, and ostensibly he was so; but, as a

* Tischreden. Förstemann, xxii. 37.

heretic and a furious assailant of the Pope, many hated him bitterly.

That Luther, more even than the majority of his educated contemporaries, had superstitious views as to the devil, admits of no question. But his doctrine on the subject did not practically vitiate his ethical scheme, or prejudice his work as a reformer. The essence of his teaching was joy—joy in God; through grace the world was to be filled with Divine light. All sadness, all pain, all depression were, with him, alien to the nature of Christian salvation. Against the glorious outstreaming of this joy from the throne of God the darkness contended—the darkness of sin and of death, night against day. The darkness—name it, account for it, characterise it, as we may—is *there*. Luther called it devil. It is no great matter what he called it. The great matter is to recognise the celestial nature of the light of pure and holy joy—that is, of perfectly healthful joy—which the diabolic night opposed. All bright, glad, wholesome things ranged themselves, to the eye of Luther, under the Lord of Life—Christ; all beauty, all music, all truth, all righteousness, all lovingkindness. Melancholy, on the other hand, disease, tempest, famine, falsehood, injustice, cruelty, trooped after the banner of Satan, the murky flag of hell. For Luther the Gospel of salvation was the sublimest, and at the same time the most efficient, exemplification afforded in the universe of the radiancy of light. True, he could not have silenced the metaphysical or logical objector who undertook the part of devil's advocate. Strictly

speaking, Satan exercised no free agency. He was merely, as Luther phrased it, God's "hangman," or the scavenger—the refuse-burner—of the universe. Luther most carefully added that God gave the devil no direct orders—only permitted his evil courses. Still, the *advocatus diaboli* might perplexingly argue that it was hard to pay the hangman, after his services became superfluous, in the way in which Luther never doubted, though the more child-hearted Origen did, that Satan was to be everlastingly paid. But metaphysicians and logicians were no great authorities in Luther's estimation; and sensible people have very generally made up their minds to agree with him in dispensing with an all-round explanation of sin's punishment, either in man or in devil. The *fact* of that punishment was, with him, the grand point. More practically important is the further concession which one is compelled to make, that modern science, speaking in the name of nature, would draw the line between the vivifying light and the killing darkness—the line between Divine work and devil's work—in a way considerably different from Luther's. Science cannot admit that one spirit sends the tempest, and another the fair weather. Science has been God's minister in sweeping superstition from the world; Luther's work was to sweep it from the Church. God's horses pull against each other a good deal, but they bring the chariot on. If science had not, in Luther's time, done very great things for religion, he recognised its capacity to do such in the future. "Vehemently, and by the whole breadth

of the heavens, do they," he said, "err, who think philosophy and the knowledge of nature useless to theology."* Metaphysics apart, it is a cheerful faith that "all sadness or evil comes from the devil, not from God." Somewhat strange, is it not—considering that Luther said this—that Protestantism should, in the succeeding age, have become so grimly Puritanic? The devil, thought Luther, fled from the sound of his flute; and it was perhaps from lack of the flute—from neglect of melody and music—that the devil of sombreness gained footing in the seventeenth century.

* De Wette, 345.

## CHAPTER III.

"PECCA FORTITER"—LUTHER IN THE HUNTING FIELD.

LUTHER's disappearance was the occasion, to his group of friends and of associates in the Gospel cause at Wittenberg, of surprise, distress, and consternation. Melanchthon, in particular, lifted up his voice in lamentation, like Elisha when he saw Elijah rapt away in a chariot of fire: "My father, my father!" When it became known that the lost leader was not dead, but in seclusion, his heart revived; but the news which soon arrived that Luther's health had given way plunged him anew into anxiety. "Oh!" he exclaimed, in a letter to Spalatin, "that I could sell my insignificant life for his. Earth contains nothing more Divine than he." *

But the praises addressed to him by Melanchthon found no response in the breast of Luther. His mood was one of sternest self-reproach and deepest contrition. He describes himself as "sitting insensate and hard, at his ease, praying little—oh, the shame!—instead of groaning for the Church of God." He uses expressions which, unless we have regard to their theological

* Quoted by Köstlin in his larger work.

interpretation, may startle us much, and which, even if we make allowance for theological symbolism, may continue to startle us a little. "I," he writes, "who ought to burn with spiritual fervour, burn with unholy passion—*carne, libidine*, sluggishness, idleness, somnolence."* There is not a shadow of reason, known to me, for refusing to believe that these terms refer entirely to sins of the spirit, and evince the intensity of Luther's sense of failure and imperfection when he looked into the white radiancy of his ideal.

In another letter,† he launched, or is commonly believed to have launched, into a series of expressions respecting grace and sin which, more perhaps than any words he ever wrote, have been made a handle against him by his enemies, and have perplexed his friends. Let us read them. "If you are a preacher of grace, preach not a fictitious grace, but a true grace. If it is a true grace, let it deal with ‡ true, not fictitious sin. God does not save fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin bravely—*pecca fortiter;* but still more bravely believe and rejoice in Christ, who is conqueror of sin, of death, and of the world. Sin is a necessity so long as we are in our present state. This life is not the habitation of righteousness, but we, says Peter, look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness. It is enough that we have known, through the riches of glory, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. From Him sin will not separate us, although a thousand

* De Wette, 326. † De Wette, 332.

‡ *Ferto*—literally, bear or carry.

thousand times in one day we commit fornication or murder. Do you think that it is a small price that has been paid, a small redemption that has been made, for our sins by so great and such a Lamb? Pray bravely, for you are the bravest of sinners."

The impression conveyed by these sentences is that they embody that vilest of all heresies, offensive alike to the rationalist and to the Christian, which represents the death of Christ as having purchased liberty to sin. Unquestionably the objection was very early taken to the preaching of Luther that, in the vehemence of its insistence upon faith, it placed morals in jeopardy. But no other passage is known to me, in letter, treatise, or sermon, in which he used such language as we have here. And it is certain that many years after the period of which we now treat, he threw the whole intensity of his nature into a controversial conflict with Antinomian heresy. Agricola, who as yet was one of his most trusted and efficient fellow-workers, became ultimately an advocate of the extravagant fallacy that the power of grace is illustrated by saving the soul while it continues in sin, and irrespectively of its sinning. Such at least was Luther's conception of Agricola's position, and against no tenet of the Papists did he inveigh more sharply. We shall find in the sequel that some of the utterances of Agricola to which Luther specifically objected closely resembled parts of the extract just given. If therefore it means what it seems to mean, and if it really was written by Luther, the remark appropriate and sufficient

to the occasion seems to be that it proves him to have temporarily wandered into a fen or quagmire of heresy which he afterwards regarded as pestilential. But was he really its author? The fact may, I think, be doubted. There is, indeed, the difficulty of showing how it came to be tacked to a letter of his to Melanchthon, which was found in Spalatin's library. But a conjecture may be ventured upon as to how this could have taken place. It was one of the contentions in which Agricola and his adherents obstinately persisted that Luther had himself taught the doctrine which he now condemned them for teaching. It would have been a simple matter for a fanatical Antinomian, with a gift for imitating hands, and a conscience obtuse enough to sanction a pious fraud, to insert the passage where it was discovered. Spalatin's collection of Luther's letters was too large to make it possible for him to have an exact recollection of what had been written in each of them, nor would he be likely to subject a bundle of letters, lent supposably to an acquaintance, to severe inspection on their being returned to him. It is of some importance that while the date, 1521, is particularly given in the passage, there is no note of place. In an immense majority of cases the letters from the Wartburg have some word at the end which reminds one of Luther's whereabouts. They are dated "from the region of the birds," "the mountain," "the wilderness," "my Patmos," and very often "my hermitage." In the present instance there is the year 1521, to which time a forger would be very likely to assign the words, but not an

allusion to the Wartburg. This circumstance is not decisive, for Luther's practice is not uniform; but it adds to the plausibility of the conjecture which, on general grounds, I somewhat dubiously put forward. That there is a Lutheran look about the sentences I do not deny; but it strikes me as the look rather of a clever imitation than of an original.

A third course is open to us in the treatment of this celebrated passage. We may view it from the standpoint of technical theology, recollecting, as we shall have no difficulty in doing if we have read Macaulay's remarks on John Bunyan, that theological sin does not always imply criminality, irreligion, or vice. We may ask whether it is indeed Antinomian. The reader has heard Luther himself bewailing, in terms of unaffected shame and regret, the presence in his heart of such evil passions as would merely, if brave sinning is right for a Christian, afford illustration of the omnipotence of grace. These words were written indubitably from the Wartburg. How they can be reconciled with any Antinomianism which grants a truce to evil I cannot imagine. But it is not so inconceivable that the terms of the suspected passage may be reconciled with a theological interpretation which leaves the sacredness of morality unimpaired. They are addressed to an expert in theology. Melanchthon was in no danger of missing the technical sense of Luther's words which purged them from any taint of Antinomian relationship. Happily also the elevation of Melanchthon's character, the spiritual nature of his

ambitions, activities, enjoyments, the unimpeached spotlessness of his life, render it perfectly certain that, if Luther applied to him, in the ordinary sense, the expression *fortissimus peccator*, he perpetrated an absurdity. In one sense only could it be said that Melanchthon was the chief of sinners, namely, that he, more than others, *realised and felt the presence of sin*, thus exalting the Saviour. "*Pecca fortiter;* lay the accent keenly upon sin, in order that you may more intensely embrace the righteousness of God, offered to the Christian in its stead." This is what Melanchthon might understand Luther to mean. "Abhor yourself—blacken yourself with the stain of horrible crimes, of which you shudder to think—for thus alone can you estimate the infinite preciousness of that ransom by which such sins—a whole world of them—were cancelled on the cross of Christ." In this sense, Melanchthon was a sinner, St. Paul was a sinner, Luther was a sinner; the chief sinner was the chief saint. In calling Melanchthon *fortissimus peccator*, Luther accordingly intended to imply that Melanchthon was the most accomplished in the faith of all the men he knew. It is but another way of putting it to say that, in proportion as the sinner intensified his sin, he divested himself of self, and threw open his soul to be filled with God. Luther conceived the religion of Papists to be a systematic working out of their own righteousness, and setting up of their own wisdom, against the righteousness and wisdom of God. The child of grace, on the other hand, renounced himself—looked upon his own righteousness as vileness, his

own wisdom as folly; and into the heart thus prepared the King of Glory entered. "Christ reigns, and let Him reign, in us His own sinners and fools, while Satan rages in his own wise and righteous ones." * Some may hold that this is mysticism; some that the abnegation of self, and the occupation of the vacated soul by God, are illusive; but the mysticism and illusion, if such they be, pervade the Epistles of St. Paul.

From these mysterious profundities and altitudes it is not unpleasant to return to every-day life. Of the strawberry gatherings we hear little, but are at liberty to imagine more. By degrees the good knight—Luther's entertainer—saw fit to let him roam hither and thither on horseback with one alert and trustworthy attendant. That was a great point, involving exercise of body and recreation of mind both in high perfection. Now also he can preach to a castle audience twice, at least, per week. Under these auspices his health improved, and Satan became less intrusive.

When summer waned, and sportsmen began to think of ground and feathered game, he was taken out, as he tells Spalatin, to have a look at hunting—"that pungent-sweet delight of heroes," as he ironically calls it. It did not particularly charm him. "We took two hares, and a few wretched little chicks of partridges —worthy employment, no doubt, for men who have nothing to do. Even there, among the nets and the dogs, I continued my theologising; and for me the sad

* *Ipse regnat, et regnet in nobis peccatoribus et stultis suis, dum Satan furit in sapientibus et justis suis.* De Wette, 327.

mystery of the whole affair quite balanced the pleasure. For what does it symbolise, unless it be the devil, with his snares and impious masterful dogs—to wit, bishops and theologians—hunting [souls as the sportsmen hunt] those harmless little beasts. Too truly had my heart foreboded this most melancholy mystery of simple and faithful souls. And a specially atrocious illustration of the mystery followed. I had contrived to save a little hare alive, and had folded it up in my tunic. I then went away for some short time. Meanwhile the dogs snuffed it out, broke its leg, throttled it, killed it. And thus, to be sure, do the Pope and Satan, in their fury, destroy souls that have been rescued, nothing hindered by my pains." * Simple-hearted, good-hearted Martin! But he is too severe on the Pope.

* De Wette, 335.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE WIDENING AREA OF LUTHER'S INFLUENCE—GENERAL SYMPATHY WITH REFORMATION—"AUDENDUM EST."

It is, however, in the outgoing of a man's energy, in the results it produces in the world around him, that his power is best represented; and from contemplative inspection, or curious analysis, of Luther's spiritual personality, we must turn to the indubitably authentic exhibition he makes of himself in swaying the tides and currents of thought in his time.

Pope Leo, when he heard of Luther's being placed under the ban of the Diet, and forced even by his friends to escape into concealment, may very well have thought that the danger was past, and that he might safely exult in the magnificence of the prospect which the cordiality of his relations with the emperor opened before him. But, in point of fact, the war which had been proclaimed by Luther against Rome took a new departure from the time of his condemnation at Worms and his disappearance into the Wartburg. It was during the months of his stay in the Wartburg that he developed his attack upon the external system of the Papal Church—upon those institutions and practices to which its defence had been mainly entrusted, and in

which its spirit had been embodied. This year is marked, in the history of European civilisation, as that in which Martin Luther opened his batteries upon clerical celibacy, monastic vows, auricular confession, and private masses.

The fermentation produced throughout Germany, and indeed throughout Europe, by the Lutheran movement had become immense. This we must not for one moment forget. Unhappily, it is difficult to realise with imaginative and vital adequacy the state of men's minds at such periods of intellectual, and still more of emotional, crisis. The men have passed away; the external features of the time have vanished like the fabric of a vision. How can we see the light that flashed from the living eyes, and understand all that was signified to them by incidents and events? And yet it is evident that unless we succeed to some extent in this, we know the past only as a procession of dead men, or of phantom figures projected on a wall by a magic lantern. All Gibbon's grand qualities as an historian are neutralised because he never *feels* with the people he depicts, nor enables us to do so.

Before Luther faced Charles at Worms, his writings had penetrated to Stockholm on the one hand, and to Madrid on the other, and were conned with avidity in Vienna and in London. The courtiers of our Henry read them; and the monarch himself, most arrogant, most conceited, most self-adoring of mortals, looked into them, thought them sadly heretical, and considered whether he might not take the pen into his own invincible

hand with a view to their refutation. Charles had not yet left Worms, and Luther had just sat down to write his first letters from the Wartburg, when Lord Chancellor Wolsey, by royal command, and with due pomp, circumstance, and fanfaronade, superintended the burning of Martin's books in St. Paul's Churchyard. Very imposing the pageant was, no doubt. "We have made an end of *them!*" the sublime Lord Chancellor and his sublimer master may have thought as the smoke of the volumes rose into the air. But in the workshops, in the farm-houses, even in the manor-houses, of England, there were thousands whom Wickliffe had prepared to welcome the advent of Luther.

It was, however, on the European mainland, and above all in Germany itself, that the excitement was most intense. It showed itself in countless forms and places, in street and in mart, in convent and in hostelry, in the castle of the knight and in university hall, in cathedral close, in kingly palace. That strange power of sympathy, so invisible, so potent, which carries masses of men onward as by an irresistible impulse, was on the side of Luther. Everyone who was on a level with his time glowed, or affected to glow, with reforming enthusiasm. The Humanist coxcomb who laughed at priests, and quoted Erasmus; the college lad who tripped briskly along the street with his Bible under his arm; the swashbuckler knight who shouted for freedom and Germany against Rome; the peasant who cherished a grudge of long standing against his lord,—all felt that if they did not march with Luther,

they were behind their age. The social sneer, the dreaded laugh, were with him and against the Pope. Such was the swell in men's minds—the sympathetic thrill and fermentation of the time — invisible as air, and yet constituting the essential *fact* of the situation.

It was for action rather than for speculation that Luther was disposed when he began to exercise, from the Wartburg, the functions of anti-Papal prophet and apostle. His ardent desire was that the Gospel should be preached in his absence as vehemently as while he was present, or more so. At Wittenberg, indeed, as he told Melanchthon, they were well supplied with teachers of the truth—so well that he thought of going to Erfurt or Cologne, as fields where the lack of labourers was more urgent. "We are not to take thought of ourselves," he says, striking as usual the most generous and Christian note suggested by the occasion, "but of our brothers dispersed abroad, lest perchance we live for ourselves, that is to say for the Devil, and not for Christ."* A word worth thinking of in London and New York, at a time when the competition for popular preachers is nearly as severe, and pecuniary, as the competition for opera stars!

In this same letter we have a hint that the Wittenberg men were pushing on in their anti-Papal campaign with a vivacity which alarmed Frederick. They had announced their intention to hold a public disputation on the subject of auricular confession, and had been prohibited

* De Wette, 331.

by the Elector. Luther professes himself marvellously displeased with this interference, and strongly advises that the like should not be submitted to. They ought to anticipate and baffle the Court, as he had done. "The half would not have been effected if I had hung upon the counsel of the Court." * He intimates that he will expostulate with Spalatin on the matter of the disputation. He is as good as his word. Spalatin gets a sound rating. "I am displeased," he says, in the tone of a knight rebuking a page, "that the disputation on confession has been forbidden. It would have been a useful example against the ferocity of the Papists, teaching them how little the Wittenbergians were terror-struck by my absence." †

Spalatin deserves condolence. He has a hard task —hopelessly hard. Frederick, frail in body, weary in mind, yearns inexpressibly for peace. Luther pants for battle. Spalatin loves both, honours both, would fain do the bidding of both; but cannot. So he does his best, leaning now to this hand, now to that, between the impetuous reformer and the slowly dying Prince. Nature happily has fitted the man for his place, giving him a blissful wrappage of superior insensibility. He seems capable of taking any amount of pungent lecturing without offence. There must have been a curious felicity in the make of him somewhere, for, though a phlegmatic person, he was profoundly esteemed, unalterably loved, by the most impassioned of all Germans, Martin Luther. Spalatin gets frequent

* De Wette, 326. † De Wette, 328.

admonition from his fierce friend — admonition to decision and courage. Luther would shred away with one sweep of his sword what Spalatin and his master wanted to keep pruning at for years. The best way, Martin counsels, in relation to the wide question of ecclesiastical authority, would be to cancel the universal code of Pontifical law in Saxony. "For audacity is a necessity, if we prepare any great and salutary change—*Audendum enim est, si quid magnum et salutare paramus.*" * A phrase that rings well in the grand Roman tongue, and bears unmistakably the mark of Luther!

* De Wette, 331.

## CHAPTER V.

### CLERICAL CELIBACY AND AURICULAR CONFESSION.

The pace in fact is too strong for Frederick and for Spalatin; but there were men in Wittenberg and in Germany for whom it was hardly quick enough. Carlstadt was becoming obstreperous. Wiser men than he might have lost their heads in that heated atmosphere. Pastors were rising up and claiming those natural liberties of which they had allowed themselves to be defrauded. The Bishop of Kemberg, for example, Feldkirch by name, has in these days cast off the yoke of celibacy, and taken to himself a wife. The question of clerical celibacy presents itself full-face to the leaders of the movement, claiming decisive settlement and prompt.

It is better to seek Luther's view in his letters than in his theological treatises. In the letters we have the germs that are merely developed in the treatises—the nuggets that are beaten out into gold-leaf. And it is a remark in which readers, if they have learned anything of Luther from the preceding pages, will concur, that it is as a man of aggressive ideas, practical instincts, and intense personal conviction, that he is chiefly to be valued. As a man he towers above the general

procession of theologians; and his power as a man depended on the burning glance with which he penetrated to principles, and the importunate and colossal energy with which he urged those principles into practice.

The vital germ of his opinion on clerical celibacy is to be found in a letter to Melanchthon of the 1st of August in this Wartburg summer. As usual, he has sought light in Scripture, and for him the very quintessence of Scripture, or, as he expresses it, the "voice of the Divine Majesty," is in the utterances of St. Paul. In his first letter to Timothy, St. Paul describes the prohibition of marriage to Christian ministers as a piece of malignant officiousness, perpetrated by certain persons who had given ear to "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." These dealers in devils' doctrine are more particularly characterised as "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." The language of St. Paul is generally strong; and in its strength on this occasion, as well as in the style in which the whole matter is handled—the angry emphasis with which the error is pinned to the ground, the lucidity with which the opposing truth is enunciated —we have the authentic stroke of the Pauline mallet. By temperament and disposition, bating somewhat, perhaps, on account of the vein of melancholy in his constitution, few men could have been better fitted than Luther to sympathise with St. Paul's religious appreciation of nature's good things, and to share his pious enthusiasm in enjoying them. To nothing in the

character of Luther has the consciousness of unanimous Germany and mankind given more explicit testimony than to his *geniality*. But his own experience of natural enjoyments had been limited in the extreme; and the deep shadow of monasticism, cancelling the sunlight of the soul, and silencing its singing birds, had enveloped him in his youth. From that shadow he had not, even at the Wartburg, completely emerged; but the dawn had come, the sunbeams were abroad, the broken masses of cloud were in retreat before the glad wind of morning. His mind had now reached that stage in spiritual evolution at which he could respond, on this test question of the right religious use of nature's bounties, to the inspiration of St. Paul. He could understand the principle which governed the Pauline treatment of the subject—to wit, the *moralising potency* of natural joys when accepted with thankfulness from the Divine Father. Every passion, in its healthy action, forms part of the natural dynamics of virtue. To make a man all that he can be as a natural man is the next best thing to awakening him to his transcendent capabilities as the participant of a Divine life. To exterminate natural passion is, therefore, the maxim of deservedly discredited schools of morality. To regulate natural passion, to cause it to chasten its fiery impulses in obedience to health and the social idea, is the rule of sound moralists. But if all that healthfully replenishes the fountains of life is in league with virtue—if the thrill of passion is the touch of God's finger, reminding us of His kindness—then the general principle will hold

good with special emphasis in relation to that passion of passions which bids a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife. Universal history attests that marriage is practically the main factor in civilisation. Marriage and religion are among the chief differentiating marks of man as a species. No ideal of terrestrial society at once so rational, so practical, so human, so Divine, can be named, as that which conceives it as an aggregate—say, rather, a living and harmonious unity—of happy homes.

These things being so, can we think without amazement of the fact that, century after century, the Roman Catholic Church imposed upon its clergy the yoke of celibacy? It looks at first sight like a pointed reversal of Divine injunctions—a literal saying, by God, "This shall be," and, by the Church, "This shall *not* be." The opening chapters of the Bible describe God as with His own tongue pronouncing it "not good for man to be alone," and with His own hand bringing man a woman to be his wife. The Church of Rome, since the days of Hildebrand, has said, "It *is* good for every pastor to put God's gift from him and be alone." And, from his own point of view, Hildebrand was right. He was a bold, honest, thoroughgoing ecclesiastic. His conception of marriage suited his idea of the Church and of the clergy. If the Church is a corporation furnished with mystic sacramental powers to save men; if the clergyman is a janissary of the Church, armed with this extra-natural power in virtue of his office—then celibacy will have strong arguments

to commend it. Cæsar would not have liked the soldiers of his tenth legion to be married men. He did not want them to be mindful that they had a place in human society, but to have a vivid consciousness of forming part of his army. If Hildebrand believed that the Church alone could impart saving grace—if he regarded the clergy as priests who offered sacrifice daily for the sins of the people—then he could conscientiously decide that those arrangements which cut away the priesthood from family life, and enabled them to devote their whole energy to the offering of sacrifice, were supremely excellent.

But if the Church is viewed as simply the living and harmonious unity of the churches; if the churches consist of Christian friends and brothers; and if neither Church nor churches sacramentally confer salvation, but exercise a purely spiritual influence, then the question of celibacy wears a new aspect. If Christ's aim was not to construct a corporation, but to inspire society and consecrate life, to fulfil nature's law while exalting it, to introduce no unearthly type of virtue, to bestow no arbitrary privileges or powers upon a sacerdotal class, but to turn common things into channels of grace, to make all Christians kings and priests, and to foster that robust virtue which includes whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—then clerical celibacy may be a stupendous mistake.

The Christian clergyman, on these principles, which are the principles of Luther, familiar to every reader of his books and letters, is simply the Christian layman, furnished forth spiritually in such completeness that he may be an example to the flock; the officer of the Church, solemnly set apart as such, in whom the powers common to all members of the Church are conspicuously present. If he is a Christian minister, corresponding to the ideal of Paul and of Luther, he will be an example in the home as well as in the pulpit, and will exercise social influence every day of his life. It is not conceivable that, if this is the true theory of the clergyman, he should be meant to be outside society, not inside and acquainted with its inner currents. If he is grafted into Christian society, it is not possible that he should be forbidden to marry. Luther's view does not abolish the minister in abolishing the priest, but merely requires that his qualifications shall be neither mystical nor hierarchical, but practical, personal, real, social.

Had Luther done no other thing than bring to an end, in all Protestant communities, the institution of clerical celibacy, he would be entitled to a lofty place on the illustrious roll of human benefactors. Under his auspices the clergyman, the Christian minister, instead of being expelled from society, or feared and detested in society, has in Protestant lands become one of its most esteemed ornaments, one of its most welcome guests. It is no vain boast that Protestant parsonages and manses exert a more Christian influence on the homes of a nation than Popish cathedrals. In the

pastor's wife there has been a reduplication—often more than a reduplication—of the good and gracious influences of the pastor, she and her daughters being angels of mercy in the habitations of the poor.

Our Martin—the fact must be almost as often mentioned with qualified praise, or even with modified censure, as with enthusiastic applause—advanced to his decisions by lion-springs rather than by gradual creeping. Taking up his parable against clerical celibacy, he denounced it without hesitation and without reserve. "That devil's prohibition, manifestly condemned in words Divine," away with it! Even if men covenanted themselves out of marriage when they took orders, they are now, having discovered that the covenant was with death and hell, bound to break it. "For God neither deceives nor lies when He says that this prohibition is of the devil. If then the devil put his strength into the contract, it ought not to be treated as binding by Christian men, having been made under the influence of impious error against God, error reproved and condemned, for He expressly says that the authors of the prohibition are spirits of error."* Accordingly, wherever the banner of Luther is raised against the banner of the Pope, it amounts to a proclamation that priests and bishops are to marry.

The principle that the Christian has a right to expect from his clergyman just what he has a right to expect from brother laymen, only in a heightened degree, throws a flood of light on the question of

* De Wette, 332.

confession. Luther had been accustomed to the confessional all his life. He had not found it irksome; he had not complained of it as unfavourable to his spiritual life. In his tendency to excess of self-accusation, in his shuddering fear of God, and in his hours of brooding melancholy, the words of a confessor had exercised a cheering influence upon his mind. In the Bible words, "Confess your faults one to another," he found the injunction laid upon Christians not only to ask forgiveness of each other, but to be on a footing of confidence, of sympathy, of reciprocal confession, with reference to sins committed against God. In this respect, as in all others, the clergyman was to be a more fully equipped and practised layman, on confidential terms with the members of his flock, and able to counsel them in their spiritual troubles. Luther held that it was a special advantage for the disconsolate brother to have the sincerity of his confession attested, the reality of his repentance affirmed, and the validity of Divine absolution reverently guaranteed, by one who, as pastor of the Church, spoke, presumably, the Church's verdict. Thus regarded, the practice of confession might, he held, be one of the purest, sweetest, most comforting and enlightening exercises of Christian fellowship and friendship.

But let confession be pinched and perverted into auricular confession, and above all let the clergyman be transformed into a celibate priest, the janissary of a Papal institution—would not the whole affair then be changed? Even with no claim, no pretext, to personal

intimacy, celibate lawyers and celibate doctors would be looked upon with unconquerable distrust, as family men of business and as family physicians, by husbands and fathers. But the spiritual adviser comes very close, and is proportionately dangerous. Celibate priests, sympathising with wives in their spiritual sorrows and sighing with them over their secret sins, piously stealing away the affections of daughters and delicately entering into the distress with which they bewail the hard hearts of their fathers and brothers, are intolerable, and justly intolerable, to family men.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MONASTICISM.

"PRIESTS and bishops are to marry!" It is a thought to set hearts leaping, to stimulate brains to exultant activity, to awaken in ten thousand breasts a sense of emancipation. Onward hurries the movement, with deepening force of passion, but not without solemnity, as in the rhythm of a national procession or a great religious dance, earth and air vibrating to its agitation. Once more men thrill in response to the hopes expressed in those two mighty words—joy and liberty.

Of the first of these Luther proclaimed himself the herald by insisting upon the sanctity of marriage for all alike. We are brought into more immediate presence of the second, the promise and hope of liberty, by the emergence of the question of monastic vows. There had naturally been vast agitation in convents, infinite debate between the votaries of mediævalism and the adherents of Luther. On the whole the monks and nuns had approved themselves the faithful body-guard of the Pope; but a minority, considerable in numbers and influence, were disposed to break their bonds. Luther, excommunicated by the Pope, and formally released by his superiors from his monastic obligations, might well have been excused if he had

gone full sail, without laborious weighing of reasons, into denunciation of monasticism. But he did not permit himself to be hurried blindly on. He patiently worked out the problem, starting from principles and proceeding to their application.

Vows taken under compulsion are, to begin with, a manifest outrage on the freedom of man and of Christian, and *ipso facto* null and void. Away with them! But "this also is a part of the evangelical freedom—that we can impose vows and laws upon ourselves." A most important and quite incontestable reservation. Liberty involves the right to curtail our liberty. But the Christian can use it only under certain conditions. The vow must not be inconsistent with life in grace; must not be taken in a legal and servile sense. Such a vow is "anathema." And everyone who undertakes monastic vows as a means of salvation, as a way of meritoriously commending himself to God, has taken a vow of this deadly kind. "Since, then, the common crowd of those who swear monastic vows do so in this mind, it is evident that their vows are impious, sacrilegious, contrary to the Gospel, and utterly to be rescinded and branded with a curse." Abraham vowed his first-born to God, inspired to do so, and acting freely and in grace. Manasseh, imitating Abraham, but imitating him not in the freedom of Divine and gracious impulse but in the servitude of his own will, vowed to sacrifice his son to God through the idol Moloch. Such a vow was impious and sacrilegious.

Luther proceeds to offer an opinion, interesting not only on theological grounds, but as an illustration of the *naïveté* and utter openness of his nature, as to the ethical value of his own assumption of monastic vows. Did he vow freely, calmly, and wisely, as to the living God, as he admits Abraham and St. Bernard to have done, or did he vow to an idol of his own heart? He confesses that if he had known all that was required to constitute a legitimate Christian vow, he would never have become a monk. But he cannot recall the facts with sufficient clearness to pronounce decisively as to the rightness or wrongness of his act, and has his misgivings as to its blamelessness. "I am uncertain respecting my state of mind when I vowed. I was rapt along rather than led. Such was the will of God. I have my fears that my vow was impious and sacrilegious." *

Towards the end of the letter, he relaxes in the austerity of his tone, puts the case of his being himself "free and no longer a monk," and jestingly asks Melanchthon whether he is matching him with a wife, thus taking revenge on him for having, as their friends say, provided Philip with one. "But I shall finely take care," he adds, "that you will not succeed in doing anything of the sort." Writing to Spalatin, a few weeks before this time, he had made a similar disavowal of any intention of availing himself of the liberty which he asked for others. "*Bone Deus!*" he exclaimed, *à propos* of some obstreperously liberal publications of Carlstadt,

* De Wette, 336.

"are our Wittenbergians going to give wives even to monks? But they will not manage to foist a wife upon me!" Hitherto his mind, so much akin to Dr. Newman's in its intense realisation of the idea of God, had resembled Newman's also in presenting a blind side to the captivation of woman. But in the depths of his nature there were qualities enabling him to appreciate the best blessings of home; and before the year is out we find him confessing that in his view "marriage, even in extreme poverty, is paradise."

Paradise or purgatory, there is as yet no glimpse, even the most distant, of marriage for him. With his usual energy he has prepared a treatise on the subject of monastic vows, and sends it on along with the letter to Melanchthon. And by way of preface to it he composes a letter to old John Luther, who, pursuing his sure-footed, open-eyed, intelligent course of life in Mansfeld Valley, had not been put beside himself by these developments of his son. A fund of sturdiest, soundest Protestantism had, we know, been latent all along in John; and it is surprising how much of Martin's innovations had consisted in mere giving of expression to the paternal principles. He now, casting his eye over fifteen years of monastic experience, owns the wisdom and the piety which had characterised his father's conduct on the occasion of his entering the convent. He had then told his father that "a terrible appearance from heaven" called him to take the vow. Thereupon his father had answered, "God grant that it was not a deceit and diabolical

illusion." The word penetrated at once to the foundations of Martin's soul, but he strove against it, and for the time prevailed. "Have you never heard"—this also his father said—"that a son should obey his parents?" Again he was shaken; but again he hardened his heart, falling back for support on his peculiar holiness and the thought that the father was to be looked down on from the heights of ecclesiastical sanctity as a mere layman. The Galahad of two-and-twenty had contrived to satisfy himself that he stood on a higher moral level than his father. He now, more firmly than when he wrote to Spalatin, decides against himself. He had not been in a spiritual state befitting the monastic life. Apart from terror, he would not have become a monk; without the lightning-flash he would not "heartily and willingly" have taken the vows.

But God had brought good out of his "error and sin." Had he never entered a convent, this shattering of the towers of Babylon that was in progress might never have taken place. "Look," he says to his father, "would you not rather have lost a hundred sons than not have seen this great good brought out of evil? It seems to me that from my youth Satan has been foreseeing the defeat he now suffers. For this reason, in order to destroy or to obstruct me, he has raved and raged against me with such opulence of invention that I have often reflected with amazement whether it was not upon me alone, among all men, that he concentrated his attacks." This notion of his having monopolised the activity of the devil during all these years

will move a smile in modern times; but it was a very earnest thought for Martin Luther.

He proceeds to inform his father that now he is entirely of his mind—ready to show him full obedience in rending himself from his monkish vows. And though he does not enter on a formal or detailed examination of monastic institutions, he touches upon some essential points regarding them. Monasticism, with the Papacy and all the imposing array of mediæval theology at its back, he impugns on the ground that it has disproportionately exalted the ethical value of the virgin state. He denies that the "chastity" to which the monk devotes himself deserves, distinctively, that name. The word, he contends, rightly denotes faithfulness in the married state. Chastity in the unmarried man or woman is taken for granted in Scripture, as a thing which all moral persons are presumed to possess without registration of vows. The want of it is a sin; the presence of it is no virtue; the so-called virtue that arises from the vow to decline wedlock is artificial, and usurps a name which belongs to faithfulness in the wife and in the husband. Wilful bachelorhood and old-maidhood are, by the Papistical eulogists of monks and nuns, "dressed in the stolen plumes that ought to adorn married chastity, and thus made into decoys for men and women, to the peril of their souls' salvation."

What a potency and grandeur of practical sense reside in this man! What a transformation, or *boule-versement,* he effects in all mediæval ideas! Down with the fantastic, woe-begone, white-faced chastity of nuns

and monks! Up with the chastity of ardent youth and blooming girl, of loving husband and honest wife! Down with the filmy, dream-nurtured, moon-gazing chastity of Egyptian hermits and Oriental ascetics, and up with the chastity that strengthens the loins of industry, lightens the sternest toil in furrow, mine, and workshop with songs of love, and guards the gates of home! Down with sickly sanctimoniousness and all its apparatus, all its panegyric! How it falls and collapses, as before the sweep of a colossal arm!—pageantry of pretty, plausible, sentimental, sickly moonshine, enough to veil the skies! Let us have virtue that will stand the wear and tear of earth, before we tie up men and women with vows to emulate the angels of heaven.

In his robust sympathy with married chastity, Luther restored the virtue to its proper place, its native function. It was no longer an artificial virtue, enjoining and consecrating arbitrary and often unnatural isolation, puffing men and women up with the notion that they were too bright and good for human nature's daily food, but a home-bred, sinewy virtue, guarding, whether in the married or the unmarried, the highest and most human passion—love—from degradation. This does not imply that single life is forbidden, or is branded with necessary inferiority. Men and women there may be who are not adapted for marriage, and capable of living happily and usefully, either alone or in free and frank association with each other. But let not the assumption by these, and much less the

assumption by others whom nature may intend for marriage, of celibate vows, usurp and monopolise the name of chastity, claiming a transcendent, a celestial value, to which the chastity of marrying and married people has no pretence. This, as our Martin, with his usual fiery touch on essentials, reminds his father, is precisely what the Papists had done. "They presume that God esteems the chastity of abnegation of marriage as highly as they, on man's authority, esteem it. Accordingly, they dispense freely enough with what is sanctioned by God's command; but the vow of chastity, which is forbidden by God, and often undertaken against the will and authority of parents, they do not, with their dispensations, touch." These words seem to shut us up to the conclusion that Luther now believed the lifelong monastic vow to be positively forbidden to Christians. There is a limit, he thinks, to our liberty to defraud ourselves of liberty; and Christ does not choose that His servants shall work in chains. Something might perhaps be said on the other side; but practical wisdom will not be startled by this uncompromising prohibition of an indelible vow, by which one binds himself to renounce what, even if unsuited to him at the time, may, for all he knows, become suitable to him before he dies, and is in itself a supreme bounty of nature and God.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MASS.

Having hurled down clerical celibacy and monkish vows, Luther turned upon the mass. It also, in this memorable summer of 1521, he relinquished. "Never again," he wrote to Melanchthon on the 1st of August, "to all eternity, will I celebrate a private mass." The *privacy* he sees to be obviously and diametrically opposed to the idea of what, from the patent facts of its institution by Christ, was a social ordinance. But the mass itself—the offering up, by a preternaturally qualified priest, of a sacrifice for sin—was irreconcilable with the uniqueness of the self-sacrifice of Christ, consummated on Calvary.

In no instance—not in that of clerical celibacy, not in that of monastic vows—did the system of the Roman Church place itself in contrast so sharply to the system of the Apostolic Church, reflected in the New Testament, as in connection with the mass. If the Apostolic Church had been like the Mediæval Church, the Acts of the Apostles would have told, in every third sentence, of the performance of the "Eucharistic Sacrifice" by Peter or James, by Paul or John, by Silas or Barnabas. In the Church of Rome the mass cannot be celebrated

without a priest; in no instance in which the communion of believers in the body and blood of Christ is described in the New Testament—and St. Paul expressly states to the Corinthians all that he seems to think essential to the ordinance—does any mention occur of a sacrificing priest, or even, except when Christ Himself instituted the supper, of an officiating minister.

Having ascertained what he believed to be the truth on the subject, Luther did not hesitate to write upon it, and to push forward, on this vital point, his general assault on the Roman line. Towards the end of the year he writes to the Augustine monks of Wittenberg, his old friends and brothers, sending them his treatise, and praising them for their abandonment of the mass. He recognises the difficulty of their position, the subtlety and the strength of the temptations they have to withstand. They will give offence not only to indifferent worldlings, but to "pious, prudent, holy, and wise persons." They will be accused of godless audacity in upsetting old, honoured, quasi-sacred customs. The storm-winds will blow around them; the waters will rise and rage. They are to stand still and unmoved. "If ye are on the rock, the winds will howl and waters beat in vain; if ye are on the sand, a quick fall will be yours." *

He tells them that he too knows what it is to have searchings of heart and scruples of conscience in doing the work of a prophet and a reformer. "I feel daily how hard it is to lay aside the weight of a reluctant

* De Wette, 350.

conscience, dragging the chain of man-made ordinances. Oh, with what trouble and toil, even when firmly based on Holy Writ, have I been able to justify myself to my own conscience! I alone, forsooth, was rising up against the Pope, proclaiming him Antichrist, his bishops apostles of Antichrist, his high schools houses of ill-fame! How often has my heart throbbed wildly in my breast; how often have I felt the pang; how often has the penetrating, self-urged argument returned! —'You, then, alone are wise? All other people wander in error, and have wandered from time immemorial? Suppose that you too happened to be wrong, that you were leading all these masses of people into error; that you were heaping on yourself the guilt of their everlasting damnation?' And so it went on until Christ, with His own sure Word, strengthened and stablished me, hushed the throbbing of my heart, and set it against this argument of the Papists as a bank of stone against the waves, scorning their rage and storm."

So feels a spiritual hero!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### REBUKING A CARDINAL.

A MERE list of Luther's treatises, letters, commentaries, translations, executed in the Wartburg, would fill pages. His letters to eminent persons, eminent in station or distinguished for gifts, would furnish materials for a long essay. It is possible here to do no more than touch with extreme brevity on a very few of the number. Let these be his letter to Count Albert of Mansfeld; his letter, or, in substance, his two letters to Albert of Mayence and Hohenzollern, Cardinal, Archbishop, and Electoral Prince; and his letters to Spalatin, chaplain and confidential councillor to Frederick of Saxony.

As our Martin, in all his experiences of renown or of danger, remained firmly knit by ties of affection to his father's house in Mansfeld valley, so he never wavered in the faithfulness of his allegiance, and the tenderness of his regard for the castle and the family on Mansfeld crag. The ancient house of Mansfeld had its representatives at Worms when Luther faced Aleandro and Charles; and we cannot err in supposing that Count Hoyer and his two brothers, whose names appear in the list of the assembled leaders of Deutschland, were in the throng of stout knights and nobles who

clamoured for something like fair play on his behalf. Albert, the youngest of the Mansfeld counts, we know to have been a fervent ally of Luther's. The letter addressed to him "from the wilderness" of the Wartburg, though pointed in its personal references, forms also the preface to an exposition of the Epistles and Gospels, which was published in Wittenberg in 1522, and which formed part—a solacing and delightful part, we may be very sure—of Luther's many-sided activity during the summer of 1521.

He touches, with a solemn delicacy, on Albert's position as the youngest of the brothers. Christ also sprang from a youngest son, Joash, the infant life snatched from the murderous rage of Athaliah. He suggests a meaning for Christ's words, spoken with reference to John the Baptist, which, though ingenious almost to the pitch of fancifulness, is highly characteristic of Luther, and certainly is not alien from the manner and spirit of Christ. Among those that are born of women, said Christ, none greater had arisen than John the Baptist; "but the least in the Kingdom of heaven" was greater than he. By "the least in the Kingdom of heaven" was meant, according to Luther, Christ Himself. "The least of all is none other than Christ. No one has been brought so low as He; no one has made himself so little as Christ; therefore He alone dares to say, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.' This can no saint ever presume to say. The mastership in humility and gentleness not one of them can claim. They are all scholars under the one Master. St.

Paul, accordingly, when he says to the Corinthians, 'Follow after me,' introduces promptly the right Master, adding 'as I follow Christ.' It is not Paul, but Christ in Paul, and Paul in Christ, that he sets up as an example." The inmost essence—the soul's soul—of Luther's Christianity lies in this identification of the believer with Christ. Not in the sense that the believer is incapable of sin, or does not actually sin, or that a righteousness of his own is produced in him which he can present to God as the purchase-money of salvation, but in the sense that the immortal life in him—the inextinguishable particle—is Christ. Were I not persuaded that Luther held the soul to be naturally immortal, I should find it hard to distinguish his doctrine on this point from that of immortality conditional upon union with Christ, which has in the last twenty years been so widely diffused under the eloquent and earnest advocacy of Mr. Edward White. In the rest of the letter he refers, as is common with him at this time, to the probability of his being burnt by the Papists; and tells the count that he too may have to "bite a little smoke" on Luther's account. "What they call shame is honour; what they call honour is shame. Those who are kindling the faggots deserve the fire; and those who are burnt are worthy of, and will in the last day possess, seats of judgment."

A man who with the clearest conviction believed that Antichrist wore the triple crown of the Pope, and that he was himself in daily peril of being brought by the said Antichrist to the stake, was not likely to be

serene in mood or measured in phrase when engaged in conflict with the familiar friends and allies of the Pope. And if there was anything which incited Luther to more than even his wonted passion and paroxysm in attack, it was the idea that his adversary played a double game, or fought behind a mask. Constitutionally open and intrepid, he hated double courses with an inborn and instinctive antipathy. Judge then of the tumult which raged within him when he heard it whispered that Prince-Archbishop Albert, whom he knew to have been mixed up with the Tetzell business, was at his pranks again. One of the pastors who had gladdened Luther's heart by openly taking a wife had been flung into prison by the Cardinal. Luther, it must be owned, had a vein of suspicion in his disposition, and was not indulgent in his judgments of men; he had heard that Albert, whose ostentatious, thriftless ways made him sorely impecunious, had stooped to feed his exchequer with fees paid by parish priests for permission to keep concubines; he doubtless believed that the imputations on the Cardinal's own morals were not without foundation. And now, after the torch of reformation had been shaken for years in Germany, the report reached him that Albert was actually again countenancing the sale of Indulgences in Halle, the town of his residence. Luther was greatly moved. "I will not be restrained," he wrote to Spalatin on the 7th of October, "from publicly and privately inveighing against the false god of Mayence, with his evil house (*lupanari*) of Halle." Spalatin had been expostulating

against the threatened attack on Albert, as his manner was. What is more extraordinary, as a proof of the awe inspired at this time by Luther's name, the proud Archbishop himself had been terror-struck by the rumour of what was preparing, and had sent Capito, his confidential friend and adviser, both to the Wittenberg Evangelicals and to the Elector Frederick, to urge these friends of Luther's to entreat for him that he might not be assailed.

The Elector seems to have bestirred himself beyond his wont; and Spalatin wrote to the Wartburg conveying the Electoral mind and his own to Luther. The peremptoriness of the injunction not to deal harshly with the Archbishop we may estimate from the vehemence of Luther's reply. When a ball of steel, proceeding at a very high velocity, impinges on an ironclad, the latter bursts, at the point of impact, into flame. Luther's answer was in words of fire. "I will not stand being forbidden by the Prince to write against Mayence and disturb the public peace. Sooner will I cut myself away from * you, the Prince, and every created being. If I defied the Pope, the creator of this Archbishop, shall I cower before his creature? A pretty thing, indeed, that you should think it a necessity to guard the peace of society, and should suffer

* De Wette, 346. *Perdam*—I will lose or be quit of. The word has been translated "destroy," but Luther had that word at hand if he had chosen to use it. The sense I suggest is legitimate. It makes Luther's assertion of his independence strong yet not ungracious. It would be difficult to defend the other meaning from the charge of bombast and extravagance.

the eternal peace of God to be broken by this man's impious and sacrilegious works! Not so, Spalatin; not so, Prince; but for the sake of the flock of Christ, resistance must be made to the utmost to that ravening wolf, as an example to others." He has not changed, he says, a word in his treatise, but he does not object to submit it to Melanchthon for his judgment. In the sequel of the letter he bids Spalatin, and through him his master, to be unmoved by the slanderous reports either of his avowed adversaries, or of those who are "too civilly prudent in doing the work of God." Meanwhile, he defers publication of the treatise; but, on the 1st of December, he sends a letter to Albert. As we read it, we reflect with amazement on the change which four years had effected in the relative positions of the men, and upon the immense progress which had already been made in the subversion of Popish authority in Saxony.

The tone is one of frank and sharp rebuke. Luther recalls his original attack upon Indulgences, charges the Cardinal with having been inextricably involved in that bad business, and calls to remembrance the caution he, Luther, had exercised in sparing the Archbishop and his brother, the reigning Prince of Brandenburg, and directing the storm upon less distinguished heads. Twice, writing in Latin, he had admonished his grace, and twice it had been in vain; he now wrote for the third time, and in German. Once more the idolatrous practice of Indulgence had been resumed, and poor, simple-minded Christians were being defrauded of their money

and put in peril of damnation. He bids the Cardinal leave the people unseduced and unrobbed, and show himself a bishop, not a wolf. He enjoins him also to abstain from meddling with those priests who, to avoid sin, have entered wedlock. What God has given them, let not their Bishop take away. He demands an answer, explicit and satisfactory, within fourteen days; otherwise his treatise against the Idol of Halle, that is to say against Albert, will appear. The letter is long, and there is hardly a paragraph without its sting.

Wonder of wonders! Instead of going into a towering passion, the Prince-Archbishop takes up his pen and writes to Luther in terms of courtesy and contrition. He addresses him with familiar friendliness as "Dear Doctor." He has read Luther's letter, and takes it "in all grace and good part." Not a hint is let fall that the rebuke—the Cardinal had twice been symbolised in it as a wolf—had been too severe. For the rest, the matters which occasioned it had long since been set right. He (Albert) would conduct himself as became a pious ecclesiastic and a Christian prince, in so far as God lent him grace and strength. For these he will pray, and ask others to pray on his behalf, for he knows that, apart from God's grace, there is no good in him, but he is malodorous filth (*stinkender Koth*) like anyone else, if not worse. "Brotherly and Christian chastisement I well can bear."

What a singular situation! If it affords no points of advantage to the spectacular drama, it surely is well fitted to interest all those who are capable of being moved

by the incidents of man's spiritual history. David humbles himself before Nathan. Nor can we believe that the penitent was wholly insincere. Albert leant towards the Liberal side. At Worms he had not been among Luther's enemies. His brother, Joachim of Brandenburg, had indeed favoured the sharpest measures of repression, but Albert took a leading part in the overtures for conciliation. He was ambitious of shining as the friend of good causes, the patron of good men. He shrank from an abrupt severance between past and present, and yearned more or less vaguely after a reform carried out on the lines of the Roman system. For Luther, compromise with Rome had become impossible. What is more, the profoundest consideration of the case between Luther and Rome, as we look back upon it from the distance of four centuries, justifies the conclusion that mediævalism and modernism could not be reconciled, that a Church in which the "performance of mass" was the essential act of worship, the essential function of soul-salvation, could not frame a compromise or working arrangement with a Church in which the essential matter was proclamation of the infinite grace of God in Christ. All this may illustrate the power of Luther's intellect, and the decision of his character; but it would not justify us in refusing to recognise the difficulty in which not a few well-meaning and reverent minds, among those who opposed him, found themselves placed.

Albert's letter, one is really glad to find, was accepted by Luther, when he first read it, in open-hearted

simplicity. Better—far better—was it that he should be generously deceived in such a case than that he should be coldly, suspiciously, and cynically right. The frank surrender of the Archbishop, the frank confession of his faultiness, the clear yet not inflated expression of his wish to be a good ecclesiastic and a good man, his profession of complete dependence on the grace of God, overcame Luther's doubts.* He was ready to break out into exclamations of admiring rapture, and to kiss the feet of the Cardinal.† But presently there arrived a letter from Capito, Albert's confidential spokesman, and the reading of this gave Luther pause. It betrayed the artist-hand, the cunning application of paint. Suspicion revived. He wrote, not to Albert himself, but to Capito, and the letter is one of straight thinking and plain speaking. Its first sentence is a blow. "In the same proportion in which your Cardinal's letter set me up, your own letter has cast me down. Perchance your countenance also has fallen at sight of this sad and thankless exordium. But the fault is yours. You have taken away trust and authority from the letter of the Cardinal by your untimely expenditure of rhetoric."

What has awakened his wrath and suspicion is the anxiety manifested by Capito to inspire him with mild and accommodating counsels. Capito and Albert favour the idea that preachers of truth should have regard to the sensibilities of princes. The Gospel cause, according to this meek hypothesis, may be promoted by conniving at the defects of the great, winking at their

* De Wette, 358. † De Wette, 359.

weakness, excusing their lapses, and taking care not to challenge such formidable enemies to the field. And so we are to admit that adulation and plausible pretences usher along the truth of God! Luther will give no quarter to such thoughts. The Scriptures utterly proscribe and detest such doings as προσωπολημψία, respect of persons. "I know that what you profess to want is Christian mansuetude and benignity. But what is there in common between a Christian and a flatterer? An open thing, the simplest thing in the world, is Christianity." There is time, no doubt, and there is place, for charity. But it comes after the Gospel has been preached and accepted. In stating the Gospel, there is no accommodation, no compromise. Christ dealt most sharply with gainsayers, yet, had they received Him, He would have gathered them under His wings as a hen her chickens. "Charity indeed bears all things, endures all things, hopes all things; but faith bears nothing except the Word; faith assails, devours, or, as saith Jeremiah, overturns, destroys, and dissipates all falsehood. And *cursed is the man who doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully.*" It is not perfection that is wanted; it is sincerity in the acceptance of truth. "If your Cardinal had written his letter out of an honest mind, I protest, such had been my joy, such my readiness to humble myself before him, that, casting myself down, I would not have held myself worthy to kiss the dust beneath his feet." He, Luther, made no pretence to sanctity. He owned himself a sink of iniquity. Let the Cardinal but acknowledge

the Word of grace, and he would be proud to be his servant. "But towards those who either condemn or despise, or underhandedly oppose, the doctrine and ministry of the Word, no grace, no charity, no benignity is to be shown: or rather, indeed, it is the office of supreme charity to resist with all possible strenuousness their madness and impiety."

And how is the sincerity of our sublime Cardinal and Archbishop to be tested? "Sell all thou hast," said Christ to the superfine, self-satisfied lawyer. Martin Luther does not refer to this passage, nor is there any indication of a consciousness on his part of modelling his action on that of the Saviour; but the correspondence is unmistakable. He tells the Prince-Cardinal Albert that if his faith is unfeigned, if he is not hiding hypocrisy in his heart, he will disrobe himself of his Cardinal's pallium and his episcopal pomp, and address himself as a simple parish minister to the preaching of the Word. "It is impossible that he should be in the way of salvation, if he continues Bishop of so many churches, while he is scarcely able to administer one, even though a small one." Here was a searching test. Luther might well expect that Capito would think such transcendental courses impracticable. "Who, you will ask, shall dare to address such a demand to the Archbishop? And how, I ask in reply, can you be sure of his sincerity unless you make him know and realise that this is the truth?" Once you know that the man is right at heart, you may deal as leniently with him as you please—you may tolerate

and connive at his shortcomings without contributing to his spiritual detriment. The test which Luther applied in this instance, he applied to Bishops generally. "I shall believe," he said to Spalatin, "that Bishops preach the Gospel when I see them leave their episcopates and devote themselves only to the Word." * We may hope that Albert did not find the stern discipline of Luther unprofitable, but it is certain that he did not sell all that he had and restrict himself to preaching the Gospel.

The letters to Spalatin, like all that he wrote from the Wartburg, evince the mood which is perhaps most vividly represented in this letter to Capito. His tone and temper are those of a leader calling on his men to follow him into the breach of the fortress, or to storm the batteries in the field. Not that he was incapable of detachment, frantically possessed with one idea. He does not forget to be solicitously awake to the interests of Melanchthon—to plead for an augmentation of his salary, to urge that he shall be made to leave Wittenberg on the appearance of the plague. Amid the engrossment of his conflict with the Pope, and the press of his interminable activities, Luther bethinks himself, also, that he may be a charge to the knight of the Wartburg. Spalatin is sharply interrogated on this head. "It is no matter to me," he says, "where I do my work, if only I am not a burden and a trouble to these people. I want to be a weight on no one. I altogether believe, however, that I am here by

* De Wette, 352.

the bounty of our prince. I would not stay for an hour if I knew that I was consuming the substance of my host, although he ministers to me in all things freely and hilariously."

We find that he has now decisively parted company with Erasmus. Spalatin, always inclined to moderation, had sent him some soothing counsel, backed up by the opinion of Capito and the eloquent Dutchman. "For the opinion either of Capito or of Erasmus," he fiercely rejoins, "I care not one particle." Erasmus in all his writings looks first, he says, not to the cross of Christ, but to the preserving of peace. "He thinks that all things are to be achieved by dint of civility, and a certain benevolence of humanity. But this is not the way to settle with Behemoth." He mentions that, when he first read the preface to Erasmus's New Testament, he was struck by the remark, "A Christian easily despises glory." "O Erasmus," he then thought in his heart, "you are deceived, I fear. It is a mighty difficult matter to despise glory." Erasmus, he plainly suggests, prefers the subtle sweetness of praise to the bitter tasks of duty. As for reformation by dint of civility, he holds that books with no "bite" in them—toothless, mumbling, accommodating, apologising books—do nothing to promote the cause of truth. "Popes, when they are courteously admonished, take it for flattery, plume themselves on their right of escaping correction, and persevere well-pleased because no one dares to reprehend them."

It is not, he insists, of having been too vehement in the work of the Lord that he has to accuse himself, but of the reverse. "I much fear," he says, "and am vexed in conscience, because at Worms I yielded to the advice of you and your friends, curbed my spirit, and did not give those patrons of falsehood some earnest of a present Elijah. They would hear another tale if I were again summoned to meet them."

But though there is ever and anon an angry glittering of the eye, and a snort of the nostrils, when Spalatin irritates him by soft sayings, Luther never dreams that his familiar friend is other than he has, from their youth up, known him to be: his reverently obsequious vassal and Gibeonite, devoutly believing in his plenary inspiration, glad to do his fetching and carrying, and to take all mechanical details off the prophetic hands. Luther sends him, without misgiving, treatise after treatise in manuscript, so soon as it is ready for the printer—controversy, exegesis, tracts on confession, on monastic vows, on the mass, and so forth —to be by Spalatin put into shape for the press, sent to this friend or that in the Wittenberg circle, and, on the whole, dealt with as Luther, aloft on the Wartburg, intends. Spalatin was, in short, the *factotum* of Luther at the Electoral Court. "Such is the sway of your great men o'er little."

## CHAPTER IX.

### A RUN TO WITTENBERG.

Towards the end of November, Luther, who had long fretted on the curb, made up his mind that life had become unendurable unless he could spend a few days, or at least hours, in Wittenberg. Apart from the impatient longing for some change, there were particular reasons that urged him to go. He wished to obtain furtherances, promised by the book stores of Wittenberg, in his cherished project of translating the New Testament into German. He wished to talk over that grand enterprise with the Wittenberg professors; above all, with Melanchthon. On the translation of the New Testament he was now concentrating his energies. It was the work in which his soul delighted, the work in which his spirit drank the reward of Christ's own peace amid the loudest fury of the controversial fray. A sure and deep instinct told him also that his best support, his firmest defence, against the Papacy, lay in a simple appeal to the records of the earliest Christian inspiration, unveiled by reverent scholarship, and placed before the unsophisticated mind of Germany in its own language.

He doubtless also had some feeling of anxiety as to

keeping himself *au courant* of the situation. His coign of vantage was of necessity to some extent a coign of separation. He yearned to mingle once more in the throng of combatants, to share in their glowing enthusiasm. Active as he was in correspondence, and though he seems to have been well served by his correspondents, he must often, as he gazed upon the autumnal woods of the Wartburg, have pined for news. The pace, besides, at which the main current of the movement hurried on at Wittenberg was tremendous; and he may have feared, at times, that he was falling out of touch with the other leaders.

When November was ending and December about to begin, he could withstand the impulse no longer. His vigilantly attentive host had provided him with an armed retainer, who accompanied him in rides about the district. The yeoman chosen for the service had proved eminently fitted for the rather ticklish business of piloting Squire George about. The latter could never be rightly taught to guard his incognito. Fond of the haunts of men, he scrupled not to make his way into convents about meal time, or to enter freely into conversation. If any book happened to catch his eye, he made for it at once, betraying an interest in its contents that seemed hardly in keeping with his knightly garb and beard, and with the sword dangling at his side. His remarks were likely to form a contrast to those of the people who commonly favoured the monks with their company. On one occasion this peculiar squire had been actually recognised for the most renowned and

popular of living Germans, and his attendant was forced to hurry him away to prevent an explosion. But Luther thus got used to the saddle; and with four stout legs beneath him, was not likely to consider a journey to Wittenberg a very formidable project.

Accordingly, on one of the early days of December, who should make his appearance in that town, and steal into the house of Amsdorf, but the enigmatical squire, whose eye, under all possible disguises, had for Amsdorf the unique sparkle that announced Doctor Luther. His friends soon came clustering round him, and there was the intensest buzz and *schwärmerei* of sympathetic talk. His picturesque garb formed a minor topic of interest. Who can be at a loss to imagine the fervour with which hands were shaken, the exultant glances with which eye met eye, the clamorous eagerness with which questions were put and answered?

But amid all this our Doctor became more and more sensible of something amiss—of something that stood in the way of complete mutual understanding. He made allusions, we may suppose, to his Wartburg writings on the mass, on clerical celibacy, on monastic vows—contributions which he, from his watch-tower, had sent on to testify that, though absent, he was neither dead nor sleeping, and with which he would expect Melanchthon, Amsdorf, Jonas, and the rest of his friends, to be familiar. They struck him as strangely ignorant on the subject, seeming to have never heard of treatises which he believed them to have read, marked, and inwardly digested. He was not in the way of fishing for

compliments, and had none of the professional author's conceit, vanity, or touchiness; but this conspicuous ignorance of all that he had essayed to do with his pen since he had taken his perch among the birds was not pleasant. The truth could not be hid. Alas for the fallacies of hope, and the illusions of trust! Spalatin, the unsuspected, the friend of friends, had either failed to receive the manuscripts—a theory suggested only to be waived aside as obviously incorrect—or had kept them to himself and the Elector, not forwarding them to the printer, not communicating them to the Wittenberg friends, simply and silently putting them away. Here was a discovery!

Sorely chagrined, Luther seized his goose-quill and dashed off a hot and hasty letter to the recreant Spalatin. He avowed himself deeply moved. He could hardly believe that the manuscripts had reached his friend. "If you really have them, do try to put some limit to your pusillanimous prudence. Why try to row against a whirlpool? I certainly will have the things I wrote issued, if not at Wittenberg, then elsewhere. If the copies are lost, or if you insist upon retaining them, my spirit will be so embittered that I shall reproduce them in much more vehement form. You will not extinguish me though you destroy my bits of paper." In his intercourse with his Wittenberg friends, which had otherwise yielded him "the superlative of sweetness," he had found, he said, this drop of gall. "Judge you whether I ought to consider my poignant distress the just thing to receive at your hands."

He composes himself sufficiently to tell Spalatin that the spirit animating the Wittenberg men pleases him, on the whole, exceedingly. But he adds a reservation which may prove significant. He has become aware of tumultuous doings, and so soon as he returns to his place of refuge, he will prepare an address exhorting his countrymen to quiet courses. He commends himself to the "most illustrious Prince," from whom, for reasons which Spalatin will understand, he had concealed his journey to Wittenberg. He dates from "Wittenberg, with my Philip, in Amsdorf's house."

And so the habit of long and tender friendship asserts itself, and the leonine nature flings from it the chilling dewdrops of grudge and disappointment. Luther forgives what was really a stinging provocation, and he and Spalatin, *par nobile fratrum*, are themselves again. The treatises kept back by the cautious Spalatin did one by one pass into the hands of the printer and the world; and posterity may take the liberty to doubt whether Spalatin's prudence was not of use to the cause, as well as Luther's impetuosity.

## CHAPTER X.

### NEW TESTAMENT TRANSLATION.

The state of men's minds in Germany at that time may be gauged by the intelligent reader from this one fact —that Martin Luther himself, having ridden from the Wartburg to Wittenberg and back, visiting Leipzig and other towns and villages on his way, and keeping his eyes and ears open, was impressed with the necessity of allaying rather than of stimulating the excitement that prevailed. His first work, on returning to his hermitage, was to prepare an address exhorting his dear countrymen, specially his Wittenberg townsmen, to moderation. Then, with that power of detachment which was not the least enviable in his retinue of intellectual gifts, he threw the entire energy of his mind into the task of translating the New Testament. It was the central wish of his heart to enable his Germans to hear the words of Christ, of Paul, of John, as they had been actually spoken. The Book containing those words he would set apart from all others, to reign "supreme and sole, in the tongues, the hands, the eyes, the ears, the hearts of the entire population." *

* De Wette, 354.

The Gospels and Epistles had not been unknown to the people of Germany. Partial translations, defectively executed from the Latin version, had long been in circulation. But these not only retained the inaccuracies of the Vulgate, but sometimes misrepresented the Latin, and were hard, unmodulated, devoid of grace and freedom in the modern tongue. Luther made it his aim to remove mistakes by reference to the original, and to wed the exact sense to free, forceful, idiomatic German. The Greek text on which he worked was that which had, a few years before, been published by Erasmus, whose labours in this department he highly prized. The progress of critical scholarship has occasioned many alterations in the Erasmian text, and corresponding changes have been necessary in Luther's New Testament; but it does not appear to be disputed that these do not affect the essential questions in debate between theologians.

Luther took a severely just—too severe perhaps to be quite just—view of his capacity as a translator. Now, he said, when he strenuously took up the work, did he first find out what translation meant. There was henceforward, he said, no fear that he should die under the delusion that he was a learned man. "Translation," he deliberately pronounced, many years later, "a peculiar grace and gift of God." * There has been, however, among competent judges since his time, no difference of opinion as to his having possessed some of the most rare, precious, and incommunicable qualities

* Table-Talk, vol. iv.

of a translator. His superb genius for going to the heart of things—for hitting the mark—for seeing the essential—did not fail him here. Unquestionably also, though it cannot be said of him that his sympathies ran *equally* through the whole gamut of Scriptural sentiment and thought, it may be maintained that he surpassed the crowd of translators both in the range and in the intensity of his Biblical sympathies. No modern man has lived so completely in the idea of God; and the idea of God is the inspiration of the Bible. It was well said by Carlyle that the Bible is the most earnest of books; it is also the least affected of books; and Martin Luther was the most earnest man of an earnest time, the man most thoroughly exempt from affectation in the frank, strong, unaffected sixteenth century. By his character, too, and his breeding, he was the man to apprehend, or rather to *feel*, with nicest sympathetic intelligence, the combination in the Bible of great thoughts and simple words: thoughts of legislators, poets, prophets, statesmen; words not merely intelligible, but instantly intelligible, to childlike men. Luther, like Goethe, was impatient of long, involved processes of thinking and demonstrating. His genius was intuitive rather than scholastic. And the Hebraic mind was pre-eminently of this kind—light came to it by inspiration, not by ratiocination. In this fact of Luther's constitution we have the key to much in his fierce revolt against Aristotle and the schoolmen. Cardinal truths, essentially self-proving, were absolutely the soul's

element of Luther. All this adapted him to be a prince among Bible translators.

His German language had been learned not only from the best vernacular literature to be had in contemporary Deutschland—which, perhaps, is not saying much—but from converse since boyhood with an immense variety of persons of every class. He tells us in the Table Talk that his native Saxon was the classic German of the day, spoken by Kaiser Maximilian and Frederick the Wise, and received in all German lands by princes and other heads of society as the language of polite and cultivated men. He, for his part, thought the dialect of the Mark a lighter, finer speech; the words of the men of the Mark flowed in such clear-cut lucency that you hardly saw the lips move.* But the Saxon was the main dialect of Germany—the language of the common man throughout the vast Teutonic race, and therefore most suitable for Bible translation.

* Table Talk, vol. iv.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A GLIMPSE OF POPE AND EMPEROR.

Leaving Martin, then, while wintry winds pipe loud around the deep seclusion of his chamber on the Wartburg, to pass his days and nights in clothing the thoughts of the Sermon on the Mount, or of St. Paul's hymn to charity, in a German dress, we must find space for brief reference to more conspicuous, not more important, events which are in these months taking place on the stage of European history.

When Pope Leo reckoned up the profit and loss resulting from the encounter between the Papacy and Luther at Worms, he probably concluded that he had been reasonably successful. Though there are no grounds for believing that, with a heavy stake against him, he would have scrupled to do a bold, bad act, he was the last man in the world to blunder into useless and perilous crime, and had far too fine a sense of the requirements of his age to wish to have Luther's blood on his hands. He had secured against the assailant of the Vatican a decisive verdict of the respectability of Germany assembled, under auspices of the Emperor at Worms. He was a temporal prince; his

temporal principality was of ten times more consequence in his eyes than his spiritual power; and he might now securely believe that in his secular sovereignty Luther could do him little harm. The Emperor, having put the mutinous monk under the ban of the empire, had in other respects been complaisant, and afforded Leo all requisite aid in carrying out those objects in the north of Italy which he had at heart.

The course of events during the summer had brilliantly answered to Leo's projects and hopes. Before the splendid and powerful alliance of Pope and Kaiser the armies of France fell back. Parma and Piacenza were recovered. Cardinal Julius Medici, an uncle of Leo's, commanded the Papal army in the field, and took possession of Milan, which Charles had previously conquered for the allies. "It was," in Ranke's phrase, "a great moment" for Leo. He might flatter himself that the Emperor was a puppet in his hands. He might count himself still young—very young for a successful Pope—being several years on the morning side of fifty. What to him was the Gospel and anti-Gospel babblement of monks and professors in bleak Wittenberg? What for him was the burning of oil at midnight on the Wartburg, in unflagging translation of the New Testament, by a fanatical Doctor Luther?

On the day when the grand tidings of the entrance of his troops into Milan reached Leo he was at his villa Malliana. He gave himself up to the satisfaction naturally resulting from success in an important under-

taking. The festivities which the people set on foot were gratifying to him; and until late in the night he continued to go to and fro between the window and the blazing hearth. With some feeling of lassitude, but not alarmed as to his health, and in hearty good humour with himself and all the world, he returned to Rome. The rejoicings were still going on when he was struck with an illness which soon declared itself to be deadly. He had not time even to take the sacrament and receive extreme unction when the hand of death was upon him. He asked those at his bedside to pray for him; and the request was not insincere, for Leo was no cold atheist, no malignantly hypocritic man, but merely a typical figure—with jewelled hands and genial manners—of his generation in Italy. He told his attendants that his wish had been to make them happy: and this also was true; for he liked happiness too well not to prefer having happy rather than gloomy faces round him. It was the first of December, 1521.*

* Ranke and Roscoe.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SPIRITUAL ANARCHY—A CRY FOR LUTHER.

It is a familiar fact that revolutions outrun those who have conjured them from the vasty deep of human nature and human existence. After a few months' retirement in the Wartburg Luther was astounded by the intensity of the excitement which, during his brief excursion to Wittenberg, he saw on all hands. He who even on the way from Worms had expressed his amazement at the long-suffering of the Germans in presence of Roman assumptions, now felt himself called upon to issue an admonition to moderation. His name was on every lip; he was acknowledged and felt by all to be the dominating spirit of the movement; but many were beginning to exchange his steady march for a headlong race, and several personages, starting into the position of leaders, were already out-Luthering Luther.

Conspicuous among these volunteer drivers of the sun-chariot—most self-confident, excitable, and feather-brained of Phaethons—was Andrew Carlstadt. Readers have not forgotten how he rode first and apart in his vehicle, on entering Leipzig for the far-famed disputation, while Luther fared along in his waggon, at

due distance behind; how, in that moment of exaltation, a wheel broke in the Carlstadtian carriage, and out he tumbled into the mud; and how the tittering Leipzigers interpreted the omen to mean that Carlstadt imagined himself entitled to go before Luther, while fate appointed him to fall behind. The heady wine of new opinions mounted into the light brain of Carlstadt; and when Luther was interned in the Wartburg his driving became fast and furious. On Christmas Day, 1521, he administered the communion in both kinds, and almost without discrimination of applicants, in the parish church. Fired by his example, a party of students, a few weeks subsequently, rushed upon priests engaged in celebrating mass, and tore from them the apparatus used on the occasion.

Meanwhile, monks were hurrying in tumultuous throngs from their convents, some betaking themselves to trades, others becoming popular preachers and swelling the din by vociferous outpourings. Carlstadt bounded into matrimony. As in all such cases, the comic element mingled with the tragic or the solemn, and many a hungry soul, unable to contribute much to the good cause in the way of theological disquisition or fervent sermon, proved himself a true disciple of Carlstadt by strenuous consumption of eggs on Wednesdays and flesh on Fridays, or by willingness to marry. Carlstadt himself harangued in an inflated and oracular style, more and more preparing himself, in proportion as he became loud, bombastic, and inane, to believe in his own direct inspiration from heaven. The effect of

the archdeacon's eloquence—Carlstadt was an archdeacon—was heightened by that of Gabriel Zwilling, the sweetest of all the voices that the break-up of the monasteries had evolved into popular preachers.

Here was a fermentation! Let us note its extravagances, its inevitable glimpses of absurdity; but let us not forget that its central impulse was noble. The people exulted in the grace of God and in their recovered freedom; and in their exultation they did as men in analogous circumstances have always done—fell into partial confusion and spiritual intoxication, and threw themselves open to be victimised by well-meaning charlatans.

These were at hand. In Zwickau, a town lying within easy distance to the south of Wittenberg, the teachings of Luther had been received with rapturous enthusiasm; but the reservations and qualifications with which he tempered the right of private judgment were by the fiery Zwickauers either overlooked or spurned. It must be admitted that the position they took up can be defended by superficially plausible arguments. If the spirit of a man, or the immediate voice of the Spirit of God in a man, is, as Luther contended, a better interpreter for him of Holy Writ than the external authority of Pope or Council, why should not the Book be dispensed with, and inspiration from on high be directly flashed upon problems of the present, with which no seer of the past, were he Daniel, Abraham, Job, or John, could be perfectly acquainted?

Nicholas Storch and Mark Thomas, weavers in

Zwickau, believed this question to be answerable only in one way, and leaped to the pleasing conclusion that *they* were the recipients of an inspiration independent of Scripture. Mark Stubner, who had been a Wittenberg student, and Thomas Münzer—a name that will be tolerably well known in the history of the revolution now going forward—who preached at Alstädt, were of the same opinion. Storch had been favoured with interviews by the archangel Gabriel. The archangel had said to the weaver, "Thou shalt sit on my throne." Storch provided himself with twelve apostles and seventy evangelists. He and his brother prophets found great acceptance among the Zwickau populace, and their tumultuary proceedings alarmed the municipal authorities of the town. In the end they were expelled the place, and Storch, Thomas, and Stubner took refuge in Wittenberg.

It is a suggestive indication of the state of suspense, expectancy, and trepidation, in which men's minds were placed, that these prophets met with a respectfully deferential welcome in Wittenberg. Frederick, the Elector, unspeakably desirous of peace, but entirely immovable in his determination to silence no word that might be a word of truth, a syllable from God, resolved that they too should have a fair hearing. He consulted Amsdorf and Melanchthon on the subject. "I am a layman," said the old prince, now growing very frail, "and do not understand theology, but I had rather take my staff in my hand and quit my country than resist God."

Melanchthon was considerably staggered. He did not like the business. The argument on which the prophets based their rejection of infant baptism—that baptism required faith, and that no infant could have faith—gave him pause, although it did not actually carry conviction to his mind. But Carlstadt received Storch and his brethren with acclamation, as manifest heralds of celestial peace. The undiscerning multitude in Wittenberg hailed them as prophets of the Most High. Away with learning! Away with the musty inspirations of former times! Let us drink the waters of salvation at the fountain-head! Let even the Bible —a valuable Book, but belonging after all to the past— be relegated to the second place, and let the inspiration of these men, who have just been in colloquy with the angel Gabriel, take the first! Glorious news to the dunces! Greek and Hebrew—nay, Latin, and culture of every kind—were hindrances rather than helps to a knowledge of Divine things! Some of Melanchthon's pupils decided to abjure learning. What is more surprising, Martin Mohr, rector of the Grammar School, told the parents of his pupils to remove their children and apprentice them to trades. The infection was spreading among the students of the University. Carlstadt abandoned study, neglected Bible reading, and ostentatiously frequented the workshops of voluble artisans who proclaimed themselves inspired. Under his instigation the mob of zealots rushed into the churches, tore down crucifixes and the decorations of shrines, and flung out all images of saints. "Heads, hands, and

limbs were broken or chopped off, and the fragments left on the floor, or thrown into the streets, or consumed by fire amid shouts of exultation."

How was it all to end? Melanchthon—thoughtful, gentle, well-instructed Melanchthon, of refined tastes and reverent piety—felt his heart sink within him, and wished earnestly that God and the Elector would "send them back their Elias." The feeling of all rational souls in Wittenberg was that Martin Luther alone could rule the storm. As he looked abroad upon the clouds, he too felt that the hour had come when he ought to quit his eyrie.

# Book XI.

## THE PEASANTS' WAR.

1521—1525.

# Book XI.

## THE PEASANTS' WAR.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE FLIGHT TO WITTENBERG.

On the evening of the third of March, 1522, a couple of Switzer lads, one of whom was named John Kessler, travelling from their own country with their faces towards the north, approached Jena and entered *The Bear*, an inn on the outskirts of the town. The weather had been wet, the ways were miry, and the condition of their shoes and other habiliments, as well as the lightness of their purses, induced in them a demure and retiring state of mind. They observed that the room of the inn was tenanted by a gentleman in knightly garments, who, sword on knee, the hilt in his right hand, the sheath in his left, sat reading a book that lay upon the table before him. To intrude themselves into such company seemed out of the question, and they shrank down upon a bench near the door.

But the quick eye of the knight, absorbed though he appeared to be in his book, caught sight of them.

Comprehending the situation at a glance, he addressed them, bade them be seated at the table with him, offered them beer, and made them feel at home. Their accent informed him that they were Swiss, and he asked from what canton they came. They were natives, they said, of St. Gall, but had been studying theology at Basle, and were on their way to Wittenberg. The knight proved to be well acquainted with Wittenberg, and advised them to give good heed to Melanchthon, the great Greek scholar, who could instruct them in the original language of the New Testament. They evinced a keener interest, however, in Martin Luther, of whom indeed they said they were chiefly in quest, for they intended to enter the ministry of the Church, and they were anxious to know the purport and worth of those views of his which seemed to subvert all accepted ideas on the subject of the priesthood. The knight asked what people said of Luther in Basle, and was told that men's minds were divided concerning him, some extolling, some detesting. Could he, they asked, tell them whether Luther was now in Wittenberg? He was in a position, he replied, to state that Luther was not at present in the town, but he soon would be. He inquired particularly after Erasmus, the luminary of Basle. So frank, familiar, and cordial was this well-informed gentleman, that one of the students ventured to take a look into the volume in which he had been reading. Lo! it was a Hebrew Psalter. Who could the strange knight be? The spurred and sworded squire of the period, a compound of knight, soldier, and country gentleman, did

not usually talk of Melanchthon and Erasmus, or take his ease in his inn over the Hebrew Psalter.

The landlord, calling Kessler on some pretext out of the room, told him in a hasty whisper that the knight was Luther. Being unaware of any mode of accounting for the transmutation of a theological Doctor into a belted knight, Kessler believed this to be absurd; and he and his comrade, with whom he contrived to have a second or two of consultation, decided that the enigmatical stranger must be Ulrich von Hutten.

Presently two merchants entered, and took their places at the table. One of them produced an unbound volume, which he stated to be an exposition of the Gospels and Epistles just issued by Martin Luther. Had the knight seen it? "I shall soon do so," was the reply. The merchants showed themselves intensely interested in Luther, but, like the people of Basle, had their doubts whether he brought with him airs from heaven or blasts from hell. When supper was placed on the table, the thrifty Switzers begged the host to provide something for them apart; but the genial knight—versed evidently in the ways and wants of students—told them to partake of the good cheer, saying that he would square matters with the host. And so they and the merchants supped with the erudite sword-bearer, whom the reader has discovered to be Martin Luther. The fare was doubtless unexceptionable, and travel is a good whet to appetite; but the merchants and students thought less of the host's good things than of the pithy and idiomatic talk, full of

shrewdness and humour, not without the noblest patriotism and moral elevation, of their new friend. He dwelt on the religious question, making no secret of his sympathy with the Reformers, but expressing a fear that the present generation—so deeply had Papistical error been rooted in its mind—would never be wholly enlightened. The next, he hoped, would see better things. He spoke severely of the princes and nobles of Germany, then assembled in Diet at Nürnberg. Instead of considering the sufferings of the people, or preparing Germany for the acceptance of the truth, they were wasting their time in mere festivities and frivolities. When the merchants had retired, he pledged the Swiss in a last glass of beer, taking care, however, that they should have wine, which, as he had observed, they preferred. Thanking him for their generous entertainment, the students made bold to say that they took him to be Ulrich von Hutten. On this the landlord interposed. "No, no, you are not Hutten, you are Luther." "They make me out to be Hutten," he replied with a laugh; "you believe me to be Luther; I shall next, I suppose, be called old Harry."

It is worth adding that Luther did not cast off remembrance of his simple Swiss acquaintance on arriving at Wittenberg. He took notice of them and introduced them to distinguished people. A thoroughly sincere and friendly man!

On the fifth of March he was at Borna. Thence he despatched a memorable letter to Frederick. In words of great dignity, force, and elevation, he states

his reasons for betaking himself to Wittenberg. These tumults, bringing scandal upon the Gospel of Christ, have been to him a source of anguish such as he never before experienced. He would with gladness have given his life to heal the disorder. In the extremity of his pain he would have despaired, had not his faith in the truth sustained him. He felt burdened with a responsibility towards God on the one hand, and the world on the other; and under the joint impulse he threw himself into the breach.

He solemnly assures the Prince that he had received the Gospel not from man but from God. Until now he had offered himself to be interrogated and judged, thinking, in his meekness and submissiveness, to draw others. He found that his excessive self-humiliation had served not to the promotion, but to the hindrance of the Gospel. His conscience told him that he must henceforward act differently. He had done enough, in the way of compliance, in that he had sought refuge in the Wartburg, a thing to which he consented only in deference to his Highness. The devil knew well that it was not before him he had fled. He would have entered Worms had the devils opposed to him been as many as the tiles on the roofs. Now Duke George was far from equal to one devil. And if there were at Leipzig, Duke George's peculiar domain, the same call for him that there now was at Wittenberg, he would ride into Leipzig though it rained Duke Georges nine days running, and though every Duke George were nine times more furious than this one. Duke

George took the Lord Christ for a man of straw. He (Luther) would not hide it, however, from his prince that he had prayed and wept for Duke George. He would pray and weep once again; then he would do so never more.

In proceeding to Wittenberg he asks no shelter from Frederick. The matter was one in which the sword could give no help; it must be transacted by God without human aid. He who had most faith would give most help; and since his Highness was of weak faith, he was not the man to be looked to for assistance or defence. Having declined to remain in security, he took his life in his own hand, nor could Frederick be answerable to God for it if he were taken or slain. "Christ has not taught me to be a Christian at the expense of other people." "If your Princely Highness had faith, you would see the glory of God; but because your faith has failed hitherto, you have seen nothing." One thing only, in the matter of defence, would he say further. He did not ask Frederick to shield him, but he could not bear the thought of his dear prince being himself his executioner, the tool of Pope and Kaiser. No favour did he ask, but a fair field, against Kaiser, Pope, and devil. Let them come on! But let Frederick send no catchpoles to arrest him, and lock upon him a prison-door.* A letter wholly of noble strain; an authentic chapter in the God-breathed scripture of human heroism.

* De Wette, 362.

## CHAPTER II.

### LUTHER PREACHING DOWN ANARCHY.

We have arrived at perhaps the central crisis, the chief turning-point, in Luther's life. His colossal energy has hitherto been thrown without reserve into the forward-going movement; henceforth his labours, always Herculean, will be exerted in great measure to temper, to moderate, to restrain, and even to beat back the headlong forces of revolution.

He vanished into the Wartburg as the impetuous and iconoclastic reformer. In his absence the winds have broken from their cave, and the Saxon Reformation has become a tumult. The question that has now presented itself to him is whether he will yield to the clamour of the crowd, place himself on the crest of the surge, and ride in precarious elevation as the supreme demagogue of Germany, or whether he will possess his soul in patience, and neither accept for himself, nor promise to others, any freedom that is anarchic, any freedom that refuses to braid its golden locks by wisdom's side, any freedom that is not measured by truth and modulated by justice. It is the question of questions for leaders of men. If they flatter the multitude, if they take it as the leader's duty to bend to the impulse

and inclination of importunate faction, right or wrong, then they rank for ever as demagogues; if they refuse to put inclination in the place of reason, to obey a crowd clamouring for poisoned bread and for water of destruction, they are honest men, and if their powers are on a level with their honesty, they are great men. It is of infinite importance to distinguish between the demagogue, even the gifted and high-souled demagogue, and the truly heroic leader; but so difficult is the task that few accomplish it. The great man is misunderstood on all hands; nor need we be astonished to learn that Luther, at this crisis in his life, gave scandal to many. Frederick, who had known him only as the impetuous assailant of error and abuse, was terrorstruck at the idea of his leaving the Wartburg, while those who rose shrieking with the Zwickau prophets, and concluded that the kingdom of Heaven was to be taken with violence and taken at once, were chagrined to find that he did not accept their shouting as the voice of God, and that the foremost of all the advocates of liberty took his stand inflexibly on law.

Before leaving the Wartburg Luther had well considered the Zwickau phenomenon. He saw that the new excitement might be used as a furnace-blast to stimulate to fury the opposition to Rome: but was it from the Good Spirit, or was it merely the latest device of Satan, presenting himself among the sons of God? Mere power of working miracles would not satisfy him as to the Divine credentials of any proposal if it were plainly at variance with the tenor

of previous revelation. He doubted not the power of the devil to exhibit signs and wonders, and an angel from heaven would have had scant credence from him if attempting to shake his faith in truth once clearly delivered. After all, the question was whether their inspiration, which he would freely permit to speak for itself, was a bringer of celestially excellent tidings, a producer of spiritual and ennobling results. As Gamaliel said of the Apostles' preaching, and as he (Luther) had said of his doctrine at Worms, if the inner light of the Zwickau prophets had vital power in it, it would live; if not, it would die. He had as yet, he avowed, seen nothing from the prophets that bore any trace of Divine inspiration; nothing that was beyond the inventive or mimetic capacities of Satan; but he had no severer treatment to bespeak for them than that commended by Gamaliel.*

Thus prepared by meditation on the facts of the case, and study of the Bible, Luther had issued from the Wartburg an address exhorting to pacific courses, and soon followed it up by appearing in person in the midst of the storm. A feeling of joy diffused itself among his old friends, and all reverent, simple, quiet souls in Wittenberg, when it became known that Doctor Luther was in town.

On Sunday, the ninth of March, 1522, he mounted the pulpit of the parish church, and preached the first of eight discourses which he delivered on successive days.

In homely, terse, expressive language, without

* De Wette, 357, 358.

rhetorical artifice, without surplusage of florid words, he proclaimed the inadmissibility of violence as a means of propagating the Gospel, and urged the duty of consideration for the weak in the transition between the old and the new. Above all he insisted that the Gospel was a spiritual force. The Word had been the dynamic principle in his operations from the first, and it would be so to the end. The Word, he reiterated, the Word of God's creative grace, had done it all. With the Word he smote at Indulgences, but lifted no weapon against them that eye could see. While he slept, while he walked and talked with his friends, the Word worked; the spiritual power made itself felt; and weakness stole through the joints of the Papacy, weakness such as no princely defiance or Imperial frown had ever made it feel. "I did nothing; the Word worked, and worked, and accomplished. Had I chosen to ally myself with insurrectionary force, I might have set Deutschland in a bath of blood—I might, at Worms, have started a fray that would have shaken the Kaiser on his throne. But what would it all have come to? It would have been a revel of fools, with general destruction to body and soul. I did nothing. I let the Word work." The Word is all-potent, for it enters into the heart; and once the heart is taken the outworks fall of themselves.

As for the Word, it must have full course. In respect of faith and grace, there can be no compromise, no delay. You cannot, you must not, veil the sun. God all in all; Christ in us uniting us to the Father: that is the Gospel, and he who withstands it is Anti-

christ. But even this is not to be forced upon the weak in startling, importunate haste. And in relation to the multitude of non-essential things, the regulative principle is love, the method is freedom, the habit of mind to be cultivated is forbearance and mutual toleration.

Here he illustrated his views by throwing in a sketch of what took place, in circumstances analogous to those in which his hearers were now placed, when Christianity was first promulgated. "While the Apostles lived there were Hebrew Christians and Gentile Christians: those believing that the Mosaic law was still of sacred obligation; these maintaining that Christ had set them free from its bonds. Paul taught that all might observe the Mosaic ordinances, or might not, as they pleased. No essential truth was involved in the question, and no *imposition* was to be made either of the one practice or of the other. Christians might obey the Jewish law or might not, without danger either way. And so the usage was established, and prevailed until the time of Jerome. This Father insisted that the freedom of choice should be over-ruled by a *Must*, that an ordinance and statute should be made for the discontinuance of Mosaic observance. Then St. Augustine arose, and reverted to the judgment of St. Paul, alleging that Christians were free to observe or not to observe the law. St. Jerome was a hundred miles behind the truth as taught by St. Paul. And so the two Doctors tilted at each other in controversial tournament. But Augustine died. Jerome succeeded in carrying his point. Ecclesiastical statutes were

passed which compelled Christians to abjure the Mosaic law. And out of this first instance of enforced renunciation grew a thousand others, so that we were overwhelmed under a mountain of impositions."

What is the moral of this history? That in all indifferent things we are to guard against turning what is *free* for our own consciences into *law* to bind the consciences of other people. Eggs on Wednesdays, meat and milk on Fridays: yes, they assuredly are within the range of Christian freedom; but are we to make it a law that they *shall* be eaten, in imitation of those Papists who make it a law that they shall *not?* And are we to exult arrogantly over such as scruple to enjoy them, scornfully asserting that *we* alone are Christians and spiritual? Let us see to it that, in our vauntful freedom, we become not tyrants over weak consciences.

The same principles of faith and love, of freedom and tenderness, will apply to the case of monks and nuns. The monk or nun who is sensible of overwhelming temptation, and robust enough of conscience to cast away the vow that artificially guards artificial chastity, and to have recourse to God's and nature's resource against licentiousness, let him or her marry. "What God has made free, that ought to remain free." The Pope, the usurping Antichrist, has no right to turn freedom into bondage. But neither has anyone a right to make the ordinance of marriage incumbent upon all, or to say it is a sin for monks and nuns who are in no stress of temptation, and are sensible of no infraction

of their spiritual freedom, to remain in their convents. Let the cowl and the shaven crown alone, they will not choke you, however spiritual you are; and the universal law of love requires you to deal tenderly with them for your brethren's sake. "In short, dear friends, there is no mystery in the matter. You have simply to understand that *freedom is not to be turned into command.* You say, 'Here is a monk who has taken a wife, let all monks rush from their convents.' Do not say that. You say, 'In yonder church they have broken and burnt the images; the images must be burnt and broken in all churches.' Not so fast, dear brother. Or you give voice on the other side. 'This priest has no wife; therefore must no priest marry.' Wrong again! Those who are unable to maintain purity in single life ought to take wives. Those who have no difficulty in remaining single, and find it good for them to be single, may, if they choose, decline marriage, for they live in the spirit, and are not in bondage to the flesh." Inalienable vows, from which there is no relief under natural pressure, are Papistical impositions. "We are not permitted to register vows against God's commands. God has left it a matter of freedom to marry or not to marry, and do you presume, you blockhead, to construct an inflexible vow of bondage out of the Divine ordinance of freedom?"

Along with these eight sermons—ever memorable in the history of the pulpit and of European civilisation—we ought to take the address previously alluded to, entitled *An Admonition to all Christians to avoid Uproar*

*and Insurrection*, which he composed before quitting the Wartburg. The sermons may, in fact, be partly looked upon as an expansion of the address. In both one principle is laid down, that physical force is the weapon of the magistrate, and that the Christian, in his private capacity, and in the regulation of the Church, is absolutely prohibited from having recourse to it. Riotous tearing down of images, however objectionable those images might be, was forbidden to the congregation. In the Church of God, physical force has no place; the rule, if you rightly understand and apply it, is without qualification or reserve. The most frantic of the Zwickau prophets, so long as he merely prophesied, was not to be flung into chains. The wildest dream, the maddest doctrine, so long as it used no enginery but that of words, was still an appeal to the spirit of man; and, while it remained such, no finger was to be lifted against it. If, on the other hand, the most instructed Christian, the man whose countenance glowed like a lamp with the inner shining of the grace of God, was tempted to exchange spiritual force for physical, and stretched out his hand to tear down pictures or to smash images, he was instantly to be restrained by that force whose ministry he had invoked, and which God had committed, as a weapon, to the civil magistrate. "Therefore look well to the civil power. So long as it refrains from ordering change, hold your hand, your mouth, your heart, and presume not to move. Once, however, you prevail on the magistracy to intervene—once a regular order is issued for dismantling of churches,

of images—then lend assistance. If the civil power refuses, you also must forbear. If you, the evangelical Christian, anticipate its decision, and take the matter into your own hand, you are already on the path of unrighteousness, and are far more culpable than your less enlightened Popish opponents. I am on the side, and shall ever be on the side, that is made the victim of uproar and violence, how wrong soever may be its doctrinal views; whereas the side that makes use of violence and uproar, be it as sound in the faith as it may, will have me for an adversary." The infraction of the abstract principle is inevitably accompanied, he at the same time points out, with gross practical wrong. "Mr. Mob, *Herr Omnes*," cannot draw distinctions, and brings down his bludgeon on the innocent head as well as on the guilty.

He speaks with scornful bitterness of the rudely ignorant, impudently conceited persons, the bullies of the movement, who, having got hold of some catch-words of reform, some shibboleths of the new school, overcrow simpler, solider people, telling them that they know nothing of the Gospel, and passing themselves off as fine Lutheran theologians and men of progress. Sciolism and the itch of novelty were the pests and the counterfeits of reforming zeal in Luther's day as in ours.

Nothing stung him more sharply than that his own name should be used to designate the adherents of the evangelical cause. The very wicked and cruel slander, often repeated in modern times, against

the Protestant Churches, that they put the teaching of some one man, some Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, in place of the whole counsel of God, is by anticipation fiercely repudiated in these sermons. "I implore you," he cries, "to hold your tongues about my name, and to call yourselves not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? The doctrine is not mine. I was crucified for no one. St. Paul would not suffer Christians to be called Pauline or Petrine, but Christians. How comes it then that I, a poor, malodorous dustbin of a creature* should have my graceless name adopted as a badge by the children of Christ?" These words form an emphatic reply, if such is required, to the assertion that those reformers, Luther to begin with, whose grand aim was to place the Church on the foundation of Christ and the Apostles, were really engaged in an attempt to narrow it into a temple for the hero-worship of some pet theologian. The words cast at the same time a revealing and redeeming light upon many of those expressions used by Luther which appear to savour of arrogance. Never of himself did he boast—far from it: humility, melancholy, a tendency to despondency and despair, were more truly characteristic of his great and modest nature. Only when he spoke of what God, through Christ, had done in and by him—only in accentuating the greatness of God's work, thereby not denying but implying the infirmity of the human instrument—did he use words that might be misconstrued into self-praise. His own unaffected estimate of

* *Ich armer, stinkender Madensack.*

himself we have in the passage just quoted, and it is by no means alone in his books and letters.

But we must leave these transcendent discourses. Their main theme is the duty of joining together love and faith in the promulgation and diffusion of the Gospel, the sublime wisdom of trusting to the creative power of light, and putting forth no unhallowed or hasty finger in rearing the Church of God. Luther will not permit faith, confident in its strength, to deal ungently with the weak, or to outrun patience and love. He unfolds the banner of freedom in its whole width and breadth—large as the blue sky of God. Not only is man to beware of intruding a *thou shalt* when God has given liberty, but he is to beware of interpreting the mere absence of command into a *thou shalt not*. Scrupulosity, to cabin, crib, confine the natural motions and preferences of Christian souls, may enact ordinances as rigid and as cruel as those of superstition and priestcraft. Not our own preferences or methods are to be our rule in considering our neighbours. We are to take as our measure the love of God Himself. And what is Luther's conception of that love? We have it in one of those stupendous figures which may not conform to the rules of polite rhetoric, but which are mighty to move the Christian imagination. "God is a glowing oven, full of love, that reaches from earth to heaven."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE LULL.

It was a great moment for modern Europe when Luther succeeded in bridling the spirits of disorder and uproar that had in his absence bewildered Melanchthon, and rapt Carlstadt away with them in a wild dance of spiritual intoxication. To perform in such circumstances the office of storm-queller is to achieve one of the most difficult and kingliest enterprises man can undertake. Had he not performed it—had he not regained his place in the Phaethon chariot and resumed the reins of the movement—the Reformation would assuredly have gone off in riot and extravagance.

All was now changed. Men saw that to his immense faculty for destruction he added a faculty equally great of conservation. Melanchthon and the other friends of order ventured once more to lift up their heads. The magistrates asserted their authority. Those of the enthusiasts who were docile and magnanimous yielded to his influence, and returned to the ways of order, pleasantness, and peace. Such a one was Gabriel Zwilling, full of delicate rose-pink sentiment, who felt contrite and abashed in presence of the royal man, and was content to resume pulpit operations under his

auspices. Capito, who had recently been so sternly tutored by Luther, appeared at this time in Wittenberg, heard two of the sermons, came to a complete understanding with his censor, and leaving the service of Cardinal Albert, devoted himself to evangelical labour in Strasburg.

The victory was signal; but the war was not at an end. The first surge of fanatical agitation that rose in the wake of the Reformation had broken: it will not prove the last. Carlstadt sang surrender, but he was cowed rather than conquered or changed. For the moment the predominance of Luther could not be contested, but Carlstadt's inner grudge against him remained. Thomas Münzer, a darker, stronger, and subtler spirit, did not affect acquiescence, but roamed abroad hatching millenniums, and training himself to execrate Luther.

It is impossible to believe that Frederick was less than pleased, as well as surprised, by what had occurred. Schurff, his legal adviser at Wittenberg, wrote to him in terms of rapture: "Oh! what joy has Dr. Martin's return diffused amongst us, whether learned or unlearned! He is daily, by Divine mercy, bringing back our deluded people into the way of truth."* Frederick showed by his subsequent reliance on the Doctor in difficult cases that his experience of Luther's practical talent in this instance had not been lost upon him. But it is vain to deny that the worthy Prince leaves with us an unsatisfied feeling—a vague sense of his not having

* Worsley, translating from the original letter in Walch.

risen to the grandeur of the occasion. There was no enthusiastic burst of applause—no heartfelt, proud, self-accusing transport of admiration and gratitude. Judiciously he took his measures to clear himself in the eyes of Kaiser and Diet. Wisely and in sincere friendliness toward his Doctor, he employed Schurff to instruct the latter how to draw up an account of his re-appearance in public, presentable to the Diet assembled at Nürnberg. But he did not kindle into sympathetic heroism. Nay, when Luther, as his constant manner had been, wrote to Frederick on behalf of this and that penury-stricken mortal, the response was not more but less generous than formerly. Luther was pained and surprised. He took high ground in speaking of the matter to Spalatin. He would know whether his intercession had given offence, and whether he was to infer that his pleadings for the poor were irksome to Frederick. "Be sure you tell me how the matter stands. If I molest the Prince with my petitions, I shall trouble him no more. But my silence will be his loss. I shall urge no one to do good who is obstinately unwilling; let him look to it that he can answer to God for shutting my mouth." Regarding it as a thing too obvious to need specification that one duty of the Christian minister is to admonish to charity, and, as occasion offers, to suggest objects for charity; and having all these years looked upon Frederick as practically a member of his flock—and one indeed who was but a babe in spiritual knowledge—Luther justly thought that it would be a solemn thing on the part of Frederick to forego the

privilege of his begging letters. The loss would be Frederick's, not Luther's. "I am by nature abhorrent of courts," he says, "and it will be no unwelcome thing to me if it now becomes consistent with my duty to have no more dealings with them even by letter."* This was within a month of the delivery of those seven sabbatic thunders by which, exposing his life to the chance stab of any fanatic who might wish to do Pope and Kaiser a pleasure by slaying the outlawed heretic, he had performed a service for Frederick which all his horses and all his men, with jurists and magistrates to boot, could not have accomplished. Frederick, to do him justice, was a prince, and Luther's letters were sometimes adapted to ruffle princely sensibilities.

It is pleasanter to think of the homely but hearty way in which the magistrates showed their appreciation of Luther's conduct. They made him a present of cloth, and of wine and beer, and sent wine and beer also to old John Luther. A primitive way of acknowledging kingly services, but not inexpressive!

* De Wette, 382.

## CHAPTER IV.

### POPE ADRIAN.

We must now pause, if but for a very brief space, to cast a glance upon what is being transacted on the public stage of Germany and of Europe. If we would rightly know our man we must take some note of the spread and potency of his influence.

The Diet of the Empire was in session at Nürnberg in the spring of 1522. The fiercely Papistical party, whose most energetic leader was Duke George, were bent upon pushing the advantage they had won at the Diet of Worms. But time had told, and was still telling, in favour of Luther and his adherents. The tide of antagonism to Rome was steadily increasing in volume and augmenting in velocity. This being so, it was favourable to Luther that Sultan Solyman, who had taken Belgrade, and blazed subsequently as a menacing portent in the east of Europe, should have drawn upon himself the attention of the Diet in its spring session. After making arrangements, military and financial, for prosecuting the war with Solyman, the Diet adjourned until the autumn, leaving the Council of Regency, or executive committee, to do what might in the meantime

be necessary in relation to the religious question. Every week of delay was a gain for the reforming party.

In the Council of Regency Duke George had at first some success. He made the most of the disturbances which had arisen at Zwickau and Wittenberg during Luther's absence in the Wartburg. He prevailed upon the Council to order a visitation of the districts most disaffected to the Papacy by bishops known to be zealous against Luther. This visitation took place, but Luther followed it up by a preaching tour of his own, in which, at one and the same time, he denounced the Papacy, exhorted to loyalty, peace, and moderation, and proclaimed the gospel of salvation by faith alone. Duke George, therefore, and his strenuous ally, the Bishop of Meissen, took little by their move.

Frederick, wise and true but painfully slow, had in the earlier months of the year left Duke George to lord it over the Diet and Council of Regency, but in the course of the summer he proceeded to Nürnberg. Though constantly instructing Spalatin to lecture Luther on his excess of vehemence, Frederick had nevertheless, on all grave occasions, proved himself a friend. He now made it felt in the Diet that he recognised in Luther no mere fanatical preacher, hurrying on at break-neck pace, but a man who could rule storms as well as raise them.

Meanwhile the Roman conclave had performed its office, and a new Pope had succeeded to Leo. It was after a goodly number of possible Popes had been suggested, against each and all of whom some objection

had been pressed, that the vigilant and far-seeing Julius de Medici proposed Adrian of Utrecht, Cardinal of Tortosa, formerly Dean of Louvain, and tutor of the Emperor Charles. As if by a sudden inspiration, the conclave elected Adrian. The choice had been made in January, 1522, but the year was well advanced when the new Pontiff arrived in Rome.*

Adrian, his head white with the snows of more than sixty winters, was a man against whom nothing could be said; and it is interesting, though to unthinking persons it may seem strange, that under these circumstances he proved good for nothing. An innocent, studious, benevolent, unimpassioned old gentleman, he had not felt the smallest ambition to be Pope, but accepted the office in the unaffected desire to do good. He brought with him to Rome his ancient housekeeper; and the citizens and nobles, accustomed to the brilliant profusion of Leo, could appreciate the hermit-like simplicity of his manners and of his fare. He came prepared to acknowledge that much was amiss in the system and administration of the Papacy, and was devoutly willing to rectify errors and remove abuses. But this was a terribly difficult problem. Seldom has a Papa of Christendom occupied a more forlorn position than Adrian, and seldom has a more perplexing situation been surveyed than met his eye. The angry crescent glimmered along the eastern rim of Europe; but the Christian family of nations was rent by discord more fierce than had ever been known before. In vain did

* Ranke.

Adrian adjure his dear pupil the Emperor, and his dear son the King of France, to sheathe their swords. In Germany what Adrian called heresy was raising its head in a way totally unprecedented. He wished to undertake reforms both in Rome and in Germany; but neither in the one nor in the other could he in the least succeed. In Rome every abuse he attempted to pluck up was found to be rooted deep in the ground by silver threads of interest. He sent his legate, Chieregati, to the autumn session of the Nürnberg Diet; but Chieregati found that both he and his master had lost touch of the people of Germany. The Cardinal's solemn pomposity of blessing had become a mere subject of mirth and mockery to the German multitude.

The Papal envoy, true to the instructions of his master, made to the Diet a frank avowal that reform was necessary. The Roman See itself had not been faultless; corruption had descended from the Pope to the clergy, and to the whole Church system; but now there was to be reform at Rome, and it was to extend to all parts of Christendom.

The extent to which the alienation of Germany from the Papal See had proceeded is impressively attested by the way in which this ingenuous confession, which redounds to the honour of Adrian, was received. Instead of gratefully accepting the Pope as an ally in reform, and inviting the legate to make common cause with the Diet, the assembled nobles and princes turned the Pope's confession against himself, treating it as a plea of guilty, and eagerly demanded that the evil done

by the Papacy might be redressed. By way of specification of those particulars which the Diet included in the general confession of Roman delinquency made by Adrian, a list of a HUNDRED GRIEVANCES was handed to the Pontifical envoy. Chieregati was plainly told that the enforcement of the Edict of Worms against Luther, which Adrian had asked for, was not advisable. The Diet expressed a hope, which implied a request, that his Holiness would consider the grievances which had been set forth, and would call a General Council, in which the laity should have voice and vote as well as the clergy, to avert schism and restore tranquillity to Christendom. A committee of the Diet, in which John von Schwarzenberg, an adherent of Luther, played the leading part, drew up a report embodying these complaints and proposals; which report was adopted by the Diet.

The princes and nobles, assuming that the proposal of a Council would be given effect to, proceeded to consider how, in the time that must elapse before it assembled, the antagonist parties should conduct themselves. The Papists urged that in doctrinal teaching and preaching the Bible should be flanked by four unexceptionably orthodox fathers, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory. The Evangelicals stood out for Scripture alone as the standard of faith and practice. At last it was agreed that "nothing should be taught excepting the true, pure, sincere, and holy Gospel, and approved writings, piously, charitably, and Christianly, according to the doctrine and exposition of writings

approved and received by the Christian Church." Such was the deliverance or, as it was technically called, the recess, of the Diet upon the subject. The practical result of so vague an injunction could obviously be nothing else than to leave every Christian man to preach as he chose.

Chieregati was disappointed, but could hardly have been astonished. He had, in fact, found so much to startle him in Germany that his sense of surprise must by this time have been somewhat blunted. When he heard Nürnberg ringing with sermons in which the authority of the Pope was ruthlessly laid prostrate before the authority of Scripture, he made bold to hint that it was his duty, with the force at his disposal, to put into operation the Edict of Worms, and arrest the audacious preachers. But even Albert of Mayence told him that this would be madness. An insurrection of the people would, in the event of his making the attempt, have sent him and his catchpoles far.

At tidings like these Adrian stood aghast. Was ever poor soul—the best meaning, the most unselfish and pious of Pontiffs—so piteously impotent! His efforts to introduce reforms at Rome procured him inveterate hatreds, but produced no amendment. In Germany everyone seemed to be frantically bent on removing abuses; and yet, when he proposed to institute comprehensive reforms, he was met by a clamorous recital of grievances, and a contemptuous evasion of his offer to co-operate in the enterprise of improvement. He wrote to Frederick in a tone of petulant, yet pitiable,

irritation, evincing absolute ignorance of the nature of the phenomenon with which, in Germany at least, he had to do. The work of Luther was, in his estimate, a letting loose of hell. Luther was a "serpent who stained heaven and earth with his venom." Frederick had nursed the pest. To Frederick it was due "that the churches were without congregations, the people without priests, the priests without reverence, and Christians without Christ." One would have thought that Luther had spoken loudly enough and clearly enough to make it understood that his object was to persuade Christians to have nothing *but* Christ.

Adrian becomes more rational, or at least plausible, in his reference to Luther's views on the supreme authority of Scripture, interpreted by each man on his own responsibility and by his own lights. "So silly and senseless," said the Pope, "had the Elector been as to believe one pigmy of humanity, covered with sins, rather than so many renowned fathers of the Church, and so many universal Councils. The Bible was a sealed book, which only the Lion of the tribe of Judah could open, and loose the seals thereof." That Luther was one, and that the maintainers of the old theology had been many, was the most specious and effective of all the arguments used against Luther.

When he spoke of Luther personally, Adrian's words were those of a child in a passion. "Luther," he cried, "was continually inciting the laity to wash their hands in the blood of the priests. He taught that no satisfaction for sin was to be rendered to

God; that fastings, prayers, and lamentations were no redemption of guilt; that the body and blood of Jesus Christ ought not daily to be offered in sacrifice; that vows were not binding. He polluted the sacred utensils of God's house; he restored to the world, or rather to the devil, the virgins espoused to Christ, &c. &c." This farrago—sheer absurdities mixed up with bits of fact or distorted fact—proves that Adrian had conceived neither what manner of man he had to deal with, nor what was, theologically, the essential purport of Luther's doctrine and the secret of his power.

"Adrian," remarks Ranke, "said once, 'How much depends upon the point of time in which even the best of men appear!' The key to the pathetic failure of his own Pontificate is contained in this exclamation. It was well chosen for inscription on his monument in the German church at Rome." Had Adrian filled the Papal chair only three or four years earlier, when Luther occupied the position taken up by him at the Leipzig disputation, how different might have been the course of history! Luther was then willing to accord reverent precedence to the See of Rome, to own a primacy based on real claims to gratitude and trust, and to undertake, in conjunction with the leaders of the Church, a revision of mediæval theology in the light of Scripture, and a reformation of manners on the standard of Divine morality. Even then, indeed, it might have been impossible for Luther and the new Pope to see eye to eye, for Adrian was an ardent disciple of Aquinas, and had strongly promoted the judgment of the

University of Louvain against Luther. But now the objection of Luther and his followers was not merely to the scholastic theology, but to the *office* of the Pope; personal delinquencies or abuses of administration were not now the question. And this could not have been more emphatically or more luminously announced than by their declinature to accept the authority of the Roman See, even when wielded by a devout and simple-minded Pontiff like Adrian the Sixth.

In Rome the bad and the indifferent cordially hated Adrian for his attempts to reform, and there was no such ardour of enthusiasm among those who agreed with him as might have enabled him to conquer opposition. After twenty sad months of effort, with much prayer and no right manly force in going forward—a pathetic example of the facility of ceasing to do evil and the difficulty of learning to do well—an epistle, read or readable by all men, of the indispensably aggressive and militant nature of good, if it is to counteract the earth-ward gravitation of evil—one of the most pious and ineffectual of Popes laid down a burden too heavy for him.

## CHAPTER V.

### HUTTEN AND SICKINGEN.

We must glance also, and no more than glance, at one of the minor episodes in the history of the Reformation which transacted itself about this time in the Rhineland. Luther had made the air of Germany electric, revolutionary; and when the vibration of revolution is in the air, weak heads become giddy, and grown children leap frantically at the moon. There were not a few who hailed Luther eagerly as an ally, with whom he had not much in common; there were many who were at one, or nearly at one, with him as to ends, but whose views as to the means to be used to attain them he sharply condemned. Nor is it necessary to impute the slightest dissimulation to him, although it be admitted that some believed themselves to be much more thoroughly in possession of his sympathies than they really were.

By no one had he been greeted with louder welcome than by Ulrich von Hutten; and Hutten's friend, Franz von Sickingen, was as ready to strike for him with the sword as Hutten to plead his cause with tongue and

pen. Hutten is one of those historical personages whom it is not possible to regard without some warmth of admiration. An unselfish, brave, outspoken, generous nature! But with one bad defect—incompetence to take his own measure and the measure of his fellow-men. A man smitten incurably with that fatal brain-disease, a passion for extremes. What Hutten, and the like of Hutten in all periods, never can understand is that progress, if genuine, has its own laws, its own modulation—that unregulated motion goes off into infinite space. What better instance is there of free and vigorous progress than that of a ship at sea? Yet her progress depends upon the felicitous combination of a thousand fine and exact obediences. She must obey her helm; she must obey her compass; she must take counsel of the waves as she rides them, and humour every wind that sits in the shoulder of her sail. Hutten had no notion of this. Heroic of temper he was, full of audacity and random brilliance, a true child of the opening sixteenth century, discontented with past and present, fuming in chronic exasperation against priests, prelates, pontiffs, eager always for change. But he was not ballasted with common sense, and had no patience, no deliberation, in adjusting himself to the conditions of practical endeavour. When you read his address to the Diet of Worms on behalf of Luther you are sensible of arrogance, of presumption, almost of impudence, as well as of vehement sincerity and *verve*. It is like Luther's invective without Luther's sense. Such advocacy could do no good to Luther, and it was with his usual sound-

ness of discernment that he had quietly but inexorably declined, at the time of his appearance at Worms, the assistance proffered him by Hutten and Sickingen, from the neighbouring castle of Ebernburg.

Had Sickingen possessed practical talent enough to make him capable of becoming an efficient commander, there were materials in abundance at that time throughout Germany with which to construct a formidable military power. A democratic general with a hundredth part of the military genius of a Napoleon or a Cromwell might in the first quarter of the sixteenth century have placed himself at the head of perhaps the largest, and certainly one of the most fervid and courageous, democratic armies the world ever saw. But Sickingen and Hutten were too impatient to wait for the rapidly ripening harvest. In vague, indiscriminate fury against priesthoods and tyrannies, they rushed at what they took for enemies, without waiting to ask whether the selected foes were the proper men to attack, or whether they had themselves, before joining battle, made victory probable.

Among the principalities and powers of the period few were less offensively associated with either priestism or tyranny than the Prince-Archbishop of Treves, the Elector Palatine, and Philip, the young Landgrave of Hesse. One and all, these were of the liberal party; disposed to look propitiously on Luther; as favourable to change as men in their situation could be reasonably expected to be. And it was these whom Sickingen, in his blind fury, arrayed against himself. Of course, he was

soon beaten. His attempt to take Treves having failed, he was besieged in his own castle of Landstuhl. This was stormed; and when the victors poured in, he was found dying of his wounds. In a tone which we may believe to have been one of honest amazement as much as of reproach, the Archbishop of Treves addressed him: "What had I done, Franz, that you attacked me and my poor subjects in my see?" "And what had I done," added Philip of Hesse, "that you plundered my land ere I had attained to man's estate?" It was too late for explanations. Sickingen, conscious that he had meant well, that he believed the light which led him astray to be light from heaven, preferred to fall into the hands of God rather than to make his confession to men. "I shall soon," he said, "answer before a higher tribunal." He was religious; and Luther had been warmly interested in his affairs; but he failed to learn one grand lesson which Luther loved to inculcate, that the conquests of the Spirit of God are in the moral sphere, and that the sword of the Spirit is the Word. Luther foresaw the end of Sickingen's confusions, as a man might foresee the fate of a fractious child that insisted on losing itself in a wood. "It will be a dismal affair,"* he wrote to Link, in December, 1522, when informed that Sickingen had started on his enterprise. Four or five months later, when midsummer was near and the end had come, he gave his verdict on the matter in a few stern words to Spalatin. "I heard and read yesterday the true and sad story of

* De Wette, 444.

Sickingen. God is a just judge, but wonderful are His ways."*

Let us be scrupulously fair to a man whose heroism, picturesque in its unpracticality, was too ideally aspiring for a world of ways and means. If it were as easy to steer a balloon as to float it, a fine time there would be for the Sickingens! Had he been a worse man, however, he might have been a more successful soldier, and perhaps we ought to give him praise for not trying to place himself at the head of an army of peasants. His connections appear to have been not with the democracy proper, but with the minor nobles. These shuddered back when they beheld his break-neck pace, and left him "to take the precipices alone." "God is a just judge," said Luther. He will not have His hand forced by picturesque knights errant.

Sickingen dragged down Hutten, a much more important man. Turning after his friend's death from the liberal-minded Elector Palatine and from Philip of Hesse, with whose frank, strong, and generous manhood his own ardent temperament might have led him to sympathise, Hutten betook himself to Switzerland, and knocked at the door of Erasmus in Basle. Erasmus had often smiled on Hutten; for though the sovereign of European letters disliked too ruggedly honest men, he knew that it was part of his sovereignty to recognise the claims of one who had been from his youth an athlete in the struggle against obscurantism, priestism, monkery, and all kinds of intolerance and persecution.

* De Wette, 499.

But people who made an unconscionable amount of noise were naturally vexing to the serenely brilliant Erasmus. Hutten got the cold shoulder, and he was far too fierce, proud, and froward not to let the world know it. He proclaimed Erasmus a summer friend, and wandered away in moody wrath to die. In the island of Uffnau, in the lake of Zurich, in 1523, his fiery heart grew cold. It is mentioned of him that when he was at the point of death he lifted his cap to the Archbishop of Treves, "in reverence for what was above him." Carlyle pronounces this "the noblest, politest thing that is recorded of any such moment as that." *

* Quoted by Professor Dowden from MS. report of Carlyle's lectures. *Nineteenth Century Review*, May, 1881.

## CHAPTER VI.

### COMING TROUBLES.

"The anti-Kaiser is knocked over," sneered some worldly-wise men when the too highly aspiring Sickingen died; "the anti-Pope will shortly follow!" But those who thus advertised their cynical knowingness by predicting the fall of Luther and the collapse of his influence had little conception of the long day of revolutions that was to follow on the stormy morning of the sixteenth century.

The strength of Luther's influence, and the breadth and profundity of the agitation that bore men's minds along, were signally attested by the fact that these underwent no sensible check or abatement from the conspicuous and almost ludicrous failure of the swashbuckler, fine-talking party, the party of pseudo-classic bards and stagey knights errant. The Papacy reaped no permanent advantage, and the cause of Luther was not seriously discredited, because the cloud, highly charged indeed with electricity, but small in size, spat out its little fires, and shed its little matter of blood, and passed away.

Elements of far more menacing character—elements and agencies of world-wide anarchy and paroxysmal

change—were still present in the social atmosphere of Germany. The peasant population throughout a vast extent of country—a country that may be vaguely conceived as stretching from the springs of the Danube, in a westerly and north-westerly direction, almost to the mouth of the Elbe—had for a long period been in a state of discontent and turbulence. We shall err if we give *carte blanche* to the imagination to paint the peasants as angels, and the nobles and gentry as devils, just as we should err if we conceived of all sixteenth century Papists as sinners, and all sixteenth century Reformers as saints. The old order was changing in everything, and the feudal lord was becoming as ill adapted as the mediæval priest to the requirements of the new time. The peasants were growing out of those mental conditions which had made serfdom tolerable, and the nobles found themselves, by sheer change of circumstances—a change whose approach they had not marked and of which they had no distinct consciousness—not only viewed as oppressors, but under a kind of fatal necessity to play the oppressor's part. When the lord was a military leader, holding with his tribe a particular district, it was obviously necessary that the fighting men who were his garrison should not be permitted to leave of their own accord a district which constituted in fact a standing camp. A private soldier cannot live quite the same life as the citizen at large. But in the sixteenth century the peasants had forgotten that they formed part of the feudal array. There is no need to suppose that the

nobles and great landowners of Germany at that time were more cruel or exacting than nobles and landowners have been in other times and places; but it does not seem to have ever been made subject of debate that the peasant population of Germany was suffering more than the average of ills—a sternly hard average at best—to which peasant flesh is liable. All processes of social transition bring with them a certain *malaise*, and the serf of the Middle Ages could not be changed into a small farmer or agricultural labourer—could not become his own master—without passing through a bad quarter of an hour. The pains of dying serfdom were complicated with the penalties of free citizenship in its birth. The man who rejoiced to find himself getting beyond the whip of the slave-driver was startled into irritation by falling into the grip of the tax-gatherer; and the informed and reflective reader will not be surprised to learn that it was exactly where the peasants were most advanced, in Suabia and the upper Rhine lands, that chronic exasperation began to take the form of insurrection.

For the rest, a very few items will suggest to intelligent minds the general nature of the peasant grievances and claims. They demanded that the vast forests of Germany—those interminable woods that had been almost as much the possession of the born German as the sky overhead—should not be appropriated by the lords. The fallen branches and the brush-wood that warmed the cot in winter; the wild boars, the hares, the deer that roamed the meadow, or peopled the morass;

the fish that lurked in the brooks, or swam in the lakes; these appeared to the peasant faggot-gatherer, huntsman, or fisher, a natural heritage, transmitted to him from the remotest antiquity. With this general demand for freedom of the forest was connected the more particular one that the commons and breadths of natural pasture should not be enclosed. The peasants demanded equality, also, in the eye of the law. They demanded relief from the exactions of the Church and from the burden of the taxes. They demanded the complete abolition of serfdom and bondage. They demanded security of tenure in their holdings, and a remission of those galling fines which the lords were in the habit of levying on occasion of death and succession.

Such were the main claims of the peasants who swarmed to various gathering points throughout Deutschland, at the time when all German-speaking men had been thrilled and agitated by the message of Luther. Nor ought we to forget that Luther was by no means alone in representing and incarnating even the strictly religious elements of change in that epoch of revolution. Zwingli, who had been born into the hut of an Alpine herdsman within a few weeks of the day when Martin Luther appeared at Eisleben, began preaching salvation at Einsiedlen before Luther posted his Theses at Wittenberg. As Germany proper had her Tetzell, so German Switzerland had her Sanson; and the intrepid Zwingli made the rocks and valleys of his Alpine home ring with the proclamation, as articulate as Luther's own, that repentance is a spiritual act, that the

pardon of sin is not to be bought with money, that the Papacy and its myrmidons had no monopoly of heaven. He too preached the omnipotent grace and love of God, and assailed the Popish system, with its priests, monks, and sacrifices, which had sealed up the fountains of light from mankind.

Zwingli was an intrepid and clear-seeing man, and the Gospel he preached was essentially the same as Luther's; but Luther may be justly regarded as the central representative of the Reformation in its early period, for this among other reasons—that he, more powerfully than any other, impressed upon the new doctrine the character of glad tidings of great joy. Salvation was proclaimed to be without money and without price, the gift of God to all, guaranteed in that Book which God had inspired, and which Popes and priests had withdrawn from mankind. And salvation, whatever else it might bring with it, was understood to imply freedom and happiness, the breaking of chains, the flinging open of prison doors, the overthrow of all tyrannies.

We now see how the two mighty influences—first, insurrectionary wrath on account of wrongs and miseries, animating tens of thousands of peasants; second, the good tidings of salvation by unbought grace of God, preached by Luther, Zwingli, and a host of followers—were fitted to meet and join hands. It was hardly to be expected that the myriads of peasants, whose eyes flashed with joy in response to the clarion tones proclaiming salvation from Wittenberg, should make lucid

distinction between spiritual and temporal salvation. Human nature is human nature. The followers of a prophet, when counted by scores of thousands, and hungry and horn-handed, are not unlikely to yearn, in their aspirations, for something more solid than angels' food. The millennial joys which the new evangelists proffered could not but be associated by the peasant with a more visibly righteous distribution of *this* world's comforts between rich and poor, between lords and serfs. We need not conclude that they made a mere stalking horse of the Reformers' doctrine, although doubtless there might be some of the more artful men who did so. In the vast majority of instances the impulse would be a vague enthusiasm of belief that the day had at last come for justice, mercy, and brotherhood—Christian brotherhood, which surely did not mean that the Christian landlord and rich man should have good things in *both* worlds and the Christian peasant only in *one*. At all events the movement of the peasants in Germany in the period of the Reformation was avowedly religious as well as social. They put forward their claims in the name of God, of Luther, and of the Bible. The first of their demands was for the right to choose their own pastors; and to each of their main claims they prefixed a passage from Scripture.

Such, in its broadest aspect, as a grand fact or phenomenon of the century, was the rising of the German peasants. Luther conducted himself towards it in a characteristic manner, and not unworthily. His boldly avowed sympathy at the outset was with the peasants,

and he called upon the princes and nobles to do them justice. Declaring himself a born peasant, the son of generations of peasants, he spoke as for his kindred, as well as in the capacity of Christian pastor. But as the garments of the peasants became stained with blood, as their fury rose, as they more and more ceased to distinguish between innocent and guilty, and as they finally proceeded to excesses of cruelty, his sympathy waned and his alarm and anger increased. Persuaded finally that, in their frenzy, they were overturning all social order, and introducing incalculable misery and desolation, he became vehement on the other side, and made use of the fiercest language at his command to incite all men still in their senses to stamp out the mischief.

## CHAPTER VII.

### CARLSTADT'S ECCENTRICITIES.

The preceding observations on the general attitude and relation of Luther to the Peasants' War prepare the way for more particular consideration of his dealings with the tumultuary elements that played their part in that convulsion.

The unruly and mutinous forces, to quell which he hurried from the Wartburg, may be conveniently regarded as centring in two persons, Carlstadt and Münzer. One thing that lends piquant and present interest to the relations between Luther and these men is that certain tendencies are thus brought within the field of our survey which were subsequently developed in movements of great historical importance. There are moments at which Carlstadt strikes one as the father of all those Broad Churchmen who, declining to cross the border to Socinianism or Unitarianism, have murmuringly dwelt in the tents of the orthodox Shem. And in the pinched and painful features of Thomas Münzer one finds something to suggest, with a difference, the stern and sombre enthusiasm of the Puritans.

Unlike most of the people who believed in the Zwickau prophets, including most of those prophets

themselves, Carlstadt was a man of considerable parts, and of great though fitful energy. Luther had grappled him to his heart as an ally and friend, and it was only in the course of years, and with bitter anguish, that he felt compelled to give him up. With the rest of the band it was easier to deal. The mere sanity and steadfastness of Luther's mind, and the firmness of his resolution, sufficed to rid him of such frantic anarchists as actually foamed at the mouth.

When two prophets of this last type, rallying after their defeat, and inspired with impudent presumption, made their way into his cell, a short time after his descent from the Wartburg, and bade him own the authority of the Divine voice that spake through them, he invited them either to prove their doctrines from Scripture, or to produce credentials of their supernatural mission in the form of miracles. One of them, having recourse to a piece of thought-reading trickery, gave it out, as a miraculous announcement, that Luther was in those very moments veering round to the hypothesis that he, the speaker, was a true prophet. It so happened that, though Luther was under no temptation of the kind supposed, there had flitted across his mind at the moment in question, and had no doubt chronicled itself on his features, a thought as to how matters would stand if he indeed joined the prophets. But a momentary contemplation of consequences did not imply any real wavering of opinion, and his nerve was not to be shaken by a trick. The attempt to ensnare him by a bold guess confirmed his assurance that he was

dealing with charlatans. He replied, therefore, without hesitation, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" One of the two conducted himself literally as a maniac—"*spumabat et fremebat et furebat*"—thus adding one more circumstance of a corroborative kind to the evidence already, in Luther's estimate, adequate to demonstrate the self-styled heavenly prophets to have no higher authority than that of their own over-heated brains.

A flash or two from Luther's angry eye might rid him of celestials like these; but his friend and colleague Carlstadt could not be so summarily disposed of. Carlstadt was one of those men—a large class in the historical portrait gallery—with whom nature seems to have had no very definite aim. They are gifted enough to make themselves conspicuous, and yet they turn out to be unfit either for a first or a second place. Carlstadt could not adjust himself to the part of second to Luther, and yet, when he found an opportunity for taking the lead at Wittenberg, he had failed egregiously. No man of sense could have lost his head, and been carried round and round in dizzy whirl, as Carlstadt was, among the Zwickau enthusiasts. Proneness to *Schwärmerei*, though a form of mental disease to which Germans of superior parts are perhaps more liable than any other nation, pointedly evinced Carlstadt's infirmity of mind and character. The new prophets, with their glittering doctrines, warranted fresh from the mint of heaven, superseding the letter of the Bible, or so illuminating it that all aid from earthly learning was unnecessary, commanding the instant abandonment of the

old rites and demolition of the old images, and proclaiming the equality of mankind and the community of goods, turned him giddy. Hence, ye superfluous volumes of learning! Welcome, Divine voices, uttered by weavers, cobblers, peasants, rapt into transports of celestial vision! Carlstadt's fine frenzy reached a climax in his doffing his Doctor's insignia, donning the peasant's blouse, purchasing a miniature farm, beginning millennial life, and driving pigs to market.

The sting of Carlstadt's eccentricities for Luther lay in their forcing him to own that dissidence had entered the Evangelical ranks. Carlstadt had been so prominently associated with the cause that lawless unrest on his part would tend with peculiar force to bring "infamy on the Gospel and a just repulse upon its evangelists."* He was convinced that it would be easy for him to silence and put down Carlstadt, if mere personal victory were his object; but he foresaw that a public conflict between himself and his old ally would "give occasion to the enemy of glorying, and greatly trouble weak brethren."†

The conflict proved indeed to be unavoidable. We cannot follow it in its successive stages. After various passages of arms between the opponents, Luther accusing Carlstadt of slipperiness and craft, Carlstadt accusing Luther of taking unfair advantage of his position to shut his mouth, Carlstadt got himself posted at Orlamünde. This cure, or incumbency, stood in some connection with the Church of All Saints,

* De Wette, 320. † De Wette, 338.

Wittenberg, and Frederick was patron of the living. It was extremely displeasing to the Elector that Carlstadt should hold it; but the bold preacher set his authority at defiance. The people liked Carlstadt, and he maintained that it was for the congregation alone to decide who should be their pastor. Having thus stormed the pulpit of Orlamünde, he proceeded in his usual fashion. The images were cast out, the Eucharist was administered in both kinds, and, what was a much more serious matter, the bread and wine were declared to be not Christ's flesh and blood, but symbols of His spiritual presence.

There is reason to believe also that Carlstadt had developed new audacities in the way of moral latitude. In a letter of January, 1524, to the Saxon Chancellor, Brück, Luther speaks of a certain man who had been advised by Carlstadt, presumably under circumstances of extreme grievousness in his union with one wife, to help himself to two. Readers will do well to note that, at this early period, Luther held that restriction to one wife is not enjoined in Scripture. "I confess, for my part"—these are his words—"that if a man wishes to marry two wives, I cannot forbid him, nor is his conduct repugnant to Holy Writ."* He discusses the question of exceptional polygamy on the principles which he

* "*Ego sane fateor me non posse prohibere si quis plures velit uxores ducere, nec repugnat sacris literis.*"—De Wette, 572. The Rev. H. Worsley, in his biography of Luther, translates these words incorrectly. "I confess that I cannot prevent any one from taking more wives than one, if it be not repugnant to Scripture." Luther was not in the way of writing truisms. Mr. Worsley does not suggest that Luther's word was "repugnet," and, in fact, the context forbids this emendation.

applies to Carlstadt's innovations in general. The law of order is essential. The law of brotherly love and consideration for weak consciences is also essential. To these the rule of expediency must bow. "It is intensely unworthy of Christians," he characteristically says, "to stickle so petulantly (*anxie*) for the highest and newest stretches of liberty that may convenience themselves, while neglecting the grand ordinance of charity." He cannot believe that a Christian would be so forsaken by God as to be unable to accept the situation, if his wife had, by dispensation of Providence, become unable to perform her wifely duties.* In short, he disapproves of bigamy, but does not see that Scripture entitles him to pronounce it positively sinful.

Frederick was a long-suffering prince, but Carlstadt's installation of himself as pastor in Orlamünde, without his permission, was more than even he could stand. By his injunction, Luther undertook a journey of visitation to Orlamünde, with a view to making personal diagnosis of the case, and determining whether Carlstadt's incumbency wanted ending or mending. Luther came, saw, and did *not* conquer. Assembling Carlstadt's supporters, he represented to them that Carlstadt must take his departure. They urged that he was the choice of the townsmen, and declined to submit to the will of the Elector. Presently Carlstadt himself entered the

* This must be the sense of the words, "*vix credo sic desertum a Deo Christianum, ut non queat continere conjux divinitus impedita.*" The reading seems to be corrupt; or Luther may have written ungrammatically in hot haste.

place, and attempted to take part in the discussion. But Luther peremptorily refused to recognise his *locus standi*, a position which he, coming as he did on the Elector's business, in relation to a living which the Elector considered to be vacant, was fully entitled to assume. Carlstadt persisted, and it was only when Luther actually ordered the horses to be yoked for his return that he consented to withdraw.

These preliminaries were not likely to dispose the citizens to a favourable consideration of Luther's further treatment of the case. Nor can it be alleged that the theory, and still more the practice, of furious revolt against the authority of Pope and priest, to which Luther had been habituating Germans for years, tended to make congregations meek and manageable. Accordingly, when Luther asked questions, there was always some quick-witted cobbler, or other tribune of the Orlamünders, to volunteer a reply. Taking the view he had from the first adopted that the images were, in themselves, of no consequence—nonentities, *res nihili*—and meaning doubtless to lead on to the inference that they ought not to be removed in a way that violated the universal law of charity, and the universal rule of decency and order, Luther asked what Scriptural warrant could be alleged for their destruction. He was referred to the second commandment. He answered that it applied to the *worship* of images; no one could allege that the Orlamünders were in danger of worshipping them. Up starts an Orlamünder and announces that *he* was liable to the temptation of image-worship. Well, persisted Luther,

was his abuse of images to make them proper objects for violent destruction? Was wine to be spilled in the gutters, were women to be slain, because they were sometimes put to base uses? But some Orlamünde luminary, cobbler, baker, or blacksmith, flashed out the answer that God had not published a commandment enjoining people to have nothing to do with wine and women.

Too plainly there was small probability that this kind of thing would issue in agreement. Even Martin Luther could not but fail in the impossible task of convincing a crowd, by the process of question and answer, that they had been acting culpably. The meeting became stormy. Luther was not one who could stand rudeness with imperturbability of temper. He saw that the problem was hopeless, and that there was no use in trying to retrieve his defeat by mounting the pulpit. He hurried away, therefore, happy to escape without a shower of stones and mud. The cry of the multitude reached his ear: "Be off, in the name of a thousand devils, and may you break your neck ere you leave the town!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

SIGNS OF DEEPER DIVISION—MORE OF CARLSTADT.

These incidents occurred in September, 1524. Within the month Frederick banished Carlstadt from his territories. He wandered to Strasburg, and appealed for countenance and support to the Evangelicals of the place, charging Luther with having refused him a fair hearing and procured his banishment from Saxony. The echo of his complaints reached Luther at Wittenberg, and the latter issued to the Strasburgers one of his letters of warning and exhortation.*

Congratulating them on their joyful emergence from "the horrible darkness of Antichrist," and the iron bondage of Egypt, into the "wide, sure, free, and promised land" of Gospel light, he points out that now, as in the Apostolic age, sectarianism had troubled the harmony of the reviving Church. The danger hence arising ought not to induce despair, but to be confronted in faith and courage. His own right and duty to address them on the subject he based, in modest simplicity, on the patent fact that through him, as God's unworthy instrument, their souls had found healing. With some abruptness he strikes into the matter of

* De Wette, 1,142.

Carlstadt. He has two things to object to the latter. Carlstadt makes, in the first place, a fuss about some things wholly out of proportion to their importance; and he has fallen, in the second place, into error on some that are essential. On such matters as the immediate removal from churches of the external badges of Popery, and the form in which the Eucharist is administered, Carlstadt makes too much noise. He will brook no delay in the removal of images, whatever may be the wounding of the sensibilities of weak brethren. The dust and din thus raised obscure, thinks Luther, the shining of the truth, and turn away men's minds from the doctrines of grace and faith. But when the matters in question are indeed essential—when Christ Himself is immediately related to the subject of discourse—Carlstadt, he infinitely regrets to say, does not shrink from serious error.

He (Carlstadt) for one thing—a principal thing—taught that the elements in the Communion were bread and wine, symbolically and spiritually presenting Christ's flesh and blood, but not otherwise. Years before, he (Luther) had, he says, been so conscious of the advantage such a position would give him in assailing the Papacy that he had been most severely tempted to adopt it. And the matter had been pressed upon him by two correspondents who advocated the symbolical view with far more dexterous power than Carlstadt. But he did not yield then, and he could not yield now. The letter of Scripture held him fast. "I am captive. I cannot break my prison bars. The text is too mighty, and

cannot by force of words be wrenched out of its meaning." Should he ever be convinced of error on this point, it certainly would not be by the arguments of Carlstadt. These did not rest on Scripture at all—*ohne alle Schrift*—but on mere conceits and subtleties of the speculative reason.

So far Luther. He was indeed correct in saying that the subject of the Real Presence was more important than the violent or the gradual dismantling of churches. Eccentric and prone to extravagance Carlstadt may have been, but on the question whether the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is spiritual or corporeal he does not stand alone against Luther. The main phalanx of the Reformed Church has admitted, and an immense proportion of modern Protestants admit, only a spiritual presence. The common feeling among Protestants in relation to the matter has been a sense of amazement that there should have remained in the mind of Luther, like a hard angular crag in the midst of a spacious harbour, one totally indefensible dogma.

Two remarks occur as worthy of consideration on this subject. The first is that Luther may have been influenced in his decision by bias of a peculiar character. It is no fantastic supposition that in the case of one so tremulously conscientious as he, the very fact of his being sensible of a strong motive acting on him *in favour* of a particular view might bias him against it. A slippery-minded man—a man afflicted with the mental disease of supersubtlety—has no difficulty in

satisfying himself with the plausibilities of any opinion he wishes to adopt. But a scrupulously upright mind will have a tendency to go to the opposite extreme, and to be specially suspicious as to the strength of an argument when he sees much to *incline* him to admit its validity. Had Luther been in the place of Balaam, he would not have asked God *twice* to make it consistent with his duty to finger Balak's broad pieces.

In the second place, it is indisputable—the reader has seen ample evidence of the fact — that Luther did less than justice to man's reasoning faculty in connection with religious truth. He frankly admitted—not now, but subsequently—that he would believe in the corporeal rather than the spiritual presence, although the former might be a mathematical impossibility. This is a hard saying. No sane man, if he follows the proof that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, *can* disbelieve it. To say that he can is to deny his sanity. It is a familiar fact that words may be used either in a spiritual or in a corporeal sense ; it is quite certain that Christ habitually made a spiritual and symbolical use of language ; and therefore to insist on the literal sense, in one particular instance, against the evidence of mathematics, appears to be tyrannical dogmatism.

The first, then, of Carlstadt's doctrinal aberrations, as described by Luther, was his preference of the spiritual to the corporeal interpretation of Christ's words, "This is My body." But Luther more than hinted that Carlstadt and his enthusiastic friends were shaky in their

orthodoxy in another respect. To put it in one word, and that a word which will make their position at once intelligible to modern readers, their view of Christ was ethical rather than theological. They dwelt on the example of Christ. This is vehemently rebuked by Luther. "The example of Christ is," he says, "the smallest thing connected with Him. In respect of His example, He stands on the same footing with other saints—*andern Heiligen gleich ist.* The supremely important thing is to know Him as a gift of God, or, as Paul says, as the power, the wisdom, the righteousness, the redemption, the sanctification of God, given to us." It has been the habit of the most intelligently Christian minds in all countries in modern times to press towards the human Christ—to take Christ as a model in life—to seek in His humanity a vestibule leading into Deity. It is legitimate, therefore, with the reserve and qualification due to changed times, to find in the Christology of Carlstadt, as compared with that of Luther, some far-away resemblance to the Christology of our own day.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THOMAS MÜNZER.

The steadfastness and the dogmatism of Luther are well seen in bold relief against the suddenness, the speculative extravagance, and, perhaps, also, the genial pliancy and intellectual vivacity, of Carlstadt; but the mass and substance of his manhood, his king-becoming strength and mighty grasp on the principles of human life and civilised progress, are better shown in contrast to the opposite qualities, incarnated in a man round whom Carlstadt gyrated for a time when he shot from his normal orbit as a satellite of Luther.

Among the Zwickau seers this one was more dangerous than the rest. History may be ransacked in vain for a more finely perfect type of the fanatical zealot and revolutionary monomaniac than Thomas Münzer. Honest?—of course he was honest; what you may call tremendous, paroxysmal honesty—fiery faith in his own hallucinations—is the first condition of success for every such man. Narrowness of brain, *defect* of that sovereign faculty of intellect which we represent as the eye of the mind scanning the field of vision for facts and the relations of facts—this too is common to the character, and certainly was exhibited

by Münzer. With innate and incurable irrationality he combined a dusky fervour of moral heat and dogged intensity of conviction. Natural moroseness of disposition, moody gloom, and general exasperation announce themselves in his pinched features and scowling brow. Add a sombre imagination, wholesale belief in portents and dreams, enormous development of vanity and self-love, and you will have Thomas Münzer complete; a man to mix the witch-cauldrons of popular delusion, to call the spirits of revolution from the abyss and send them on ministries of blood and fire; a magician capable of raising conflagrations to sweep continents, unless some magician stronger than he contrive to chain the lightnings.

Finding his occupation gone at Wittenberg when our Achilles left his tent on the Wartburg, Münzer wandered away to Nürnberg and Bohemia, and thence to those uplands where the Danube begins to gather its waters for their long journey; raving and reciting amid populations agitated by the new Gospel sound; receiving and imparting revolutionary impulses. Returning to Central Germany, he established himself at Alstädt, a town in the Thuringian district, announcing an Evangel that claimed to be wider and grander far than Luther's, applying the doctrine of inspiration, both Biblical and personal, with greater boldness, and more frank emancipation from the bondage of the letter; and above all, promising his hearers more thrilling presentness and visibility of advantage, more prompt realisation of millennial joys. Perfectly convinced of

his prophetic mission and of the immediate approach of the day when the saints were to possess the land, Münzer not only did his office as a preacher, but set himself with strenuous determination to knit the peasantry into secret societies with a view to a rising.

Carlstadt had been drawn towards Münzer, and co-operated with him, playing tenor to the deep bass note of the sterner enthusiast. But justice compels the admission that he did not quite yield to the fascination. To Carlstadt and his Orlamünders among others came the invitation or command of Münzer to make themselves ready to join the army of the saints, forming, in the meantime, one of those associations which were, at the signal given, to start into rank as companies of an armed host. But Carlstadt possessed mother-wit enough to shirk enrolment among Münzer's grenadiers. Smashing of images, dreaming of dreams, uttering of Divine voices, these to any extent; but at armed insurrection, with a view to starting the kingdom of heaven by seizure of property, we draw the line. Münzer, and his like-minded lieutenant Pfeiffer, astonished no doubt to come upon such a vein of worldly wisdom in one from whom they had expected much, rebuked Carlstadt with asperity, accusing him and his Orlamünders of being ensnared by the fear of man, and of denying the Covenant of God.

These were difficult times for German princes. Frederick of Saxony, and his brother and heir-apparent, Duke John, both of them earnestly religious and at the same time self-distrusting, modest men, anxious to preserve

order, yet willing to give ear to any word that seemed to be from God, found it a hard task to satisfy themselves as to the line of duty. Frederick, strange as it may seem to moderns, had not been without pious fears in checking the prophetic effervescence at Zwickau. The prophets claimed to speak in the name of God, and might not suspicion of their talking nonsense be lack of faith? Münzer was a clergyman, and made immense pretensions to sanctity. Frederick did not presume to shut his mouth. In July, 1524, when the whole country was honeycombed with Münzer's secret societies, Duke John heard him preach. Nor did the fanatic put his light under a bushel. Herr Köstlin avers that he daringly proclaimed the principle of a holy war, alleging it to be the duty of Christian princes to destroy godless persons, particularly priests and monks. Obviously, however, this was just one of those instances in which either very dreadful or quite harmless opinions might be enunciated in the same terms. That the ruler is bound to smite evil-doers—that the sword is put into his hand expressly with a view to the smiting of evil-doers—is held by all who believe that the social authority has power over the individual life. Duke John had no cause to be severely shocked by being told that it was the duty of princes to put godless persons to death, so long as it remained with them to distinguish between those who were and those who were not godless. The doctrine, however, becomes one of the most terrific incitements that can be applied to the purpose of converting human beings into wholesale

murderers, when the sword-bearer is a fanatical prophet or theocratic king, and when the godless are all those who do not accept his dogmas. In July, 1524, it was still possible for Duke John to hear Münzer preach on the duty of princes to execute Divine vengeance without being aware that the words meant anything more precise than the usual pulpit commonplaces on the subject; but before the lapse of another year it had been proclaimed, in characters whose red glare continues at this hour to glimmer in the field of history, that it was not in the innocent and conventional sense, but in one of murderous efficacy, that the sword had been spoken of by Thomas Münzer as a weapon put into the hands of the saints to execute vengeance on the enemies of God.

Luther could not foresee the particular incidents of the future; but he and Münzer had singled each other out, as representing irreconcilably antagonistic principles; and soon after the arch-fanatic had preached before Duke John the responsible leader of the general movement of reformation saw that the moment had come for addressing a letter to the Elector and the heir-apparent on that other movement by which, as he believed, his own was caricatured and imperilled.* If, as has been held by great authorities, and as the records of the nineteenth century, including the last quarter of the eighteenth, seem to prove, we live in the epoch of revolutions, it is not easy to imagine a more interesting occasion, or one promising more vivid and vital instruction, than that at

* De Wette, 617.

which we have now arrived, an occasion on which revolution confronted revolution, wave met wave, and the principles of progress represented by Thomas Münzer came into collision with the principles of progress represented by Martin Luther.

Carlyle, who was a careful student of the life of Luther, has placed on record the opinion that he was a greater man than any of those who played the part of leaders in the French Revolution. It is certain that, whereas leader after leader was engulfed in the raging whirlpools of the French cataclysm, Luther did not sink in the revolution he called forth. "How seldom," says Carlyle, "do we find a man that has stirred up some vast commotion, who does not himself perish, swept away in it! Such is the usual course of revolutionists." Already, in the revolution of the sixteenth century, Sickingen and Hutten had been engulfed. Münzer was now to have his turn.

Luther begins his letter to the Saxon princes by signalising two powers, hostile to each other, which are at one in their opposition to the simple and sovereign Gospel of the grace of God. On the one hand there is the "last and mightiest of the Antichrists," the Pope; and in his service range themselves the Kaiser, and kings and princes of this world, eager to drench the fields of Christendom once more with the blood of martyrs to the truth. On the other hand are false prophets, spirits of inconstancy, lawlessness, error; heretical and sectarian. This emergence of lawless elements ought not to startle or offend those who were steadfast in the faith. Such

has at all times been, such was, as St. Paul testifies, in the Apostolic age, the experience of those who preached the Word of God. The sectarian and anarchic power has made its nest at Alstädt; and with it is his present business.

First of all—a circumstance which he views with unfeigned satisfaction—these Alstädt prophets exalt their horn above himself and his friends, sounding their own praises, owning no Lutheran lineage, and affirming that they have "neither learned nor received aught from us." They hail from Heaven direct; they come from the presence of God; He converses with them as with the angels. It is in their eyes a pitiful affair (*ein schlecht Ding*) that we of Wittenberg are concerned with—mere "faith, love, and the Cross of Christ." God's very voice, say they, we must with our own ears hear. The living voice is better than the printed Book. They even twit the Wittenbergers with their perpetual noise of "Bible, Bubel, Babel."

Luther frankly owns that he can make no claim to these sublime exaltations, these eagle flights of spiritual vision. He brags not of being commissioned to use such high words. He is a poor, pitiful creature, and did not by any means begin his enterprise of reformation in this Lucifer-son-of-the-Morning style. On the contrary, it was with fear and great trembling, as, indeed, St. Paul acknowlegdes was his case also—and one would have thought *he* might have had some cause for pluming himself on acquaintance with heavenly voices—that he had begun the conflict. With bated

breath and tremulous humility he had assailed the Pope. And yet, humble as he was, he had in fact succeeded in laying a stroke upon the Papacy such as this world-swallowing spirit — *Weltfressergeist* — of Alstädt had neither effected nor seemed likely to effect. At Augsburg, at Worms, he had managed to bear his testimony as well, perhaps, as this proud spirit, which looked down on him as the sun might on a small worm. He had spoken no great swelling words; he had been vouchsafed no super-Biblical transports of inspiration. "Out with the secret: I have no power at all except what Christ gives me. If He leaves me, I tremble at a shaken leaf; if He holds me up, I am conscious only that the praise is His." If he cannot speak face to face with God, he can study his Bible, and attain to a better mastery of it than Papist, sophist, or sectarian.

Luther here puts his finger upon one of those qualities, or sets of qualities, in which true apostles of social progress, true leaders in the procession of spiritual and moral civilisation, differ from charlatans. Practical progress aims at some definite object, prescribes to itself some method, respects gradation, and is glad to take one step at a time. Not so the quack or the sectary. A few years ago these Münzerian fanatics had hardly dared to peep into a Bible without permission of a priest. They now did no more honour to the Bible than to make it a perch from which to start in their own flights of heavenlier inspiration. It was, in their eyes, the iniquity of all iniquities to

impede such celestials as themselves. There was some excuse, they said, for the Papists. They were born in darkness, bred and suckled in error, piteously incapable of lifting their eyelids to receive the new light. But that the men of Wittenberg, who had themselves tasted the heavenly gift—that Martin Luther, who had himself snatched the reins from the lax hand of the Pope—should refuse to acknowledge the surpassing brightness, the shining of the perfect day, was too bad. Münzer and his angelic throng hated Wittenberg, Luther says, more than Rome. Everything or nothing always was, and ever will be, the grand maxim of impracticables.

While the world lasts, the example of Luther at this crisis will profit those who take part in social movements. But the plan of Münzer will always have impassioned advocates. It is so much pleasanter to regale oneself with visions of Elysium than to realise, and painfully make the most of, what has been already gained! The vision of what looms in the distance is so much more resplendent than the concrete fact! We have got our open Bible, said Luther; we have got faith and love; we can preach the Gospel of the grace of God: does not this give scope to practical endeavour for one while? Is there nothing here worth consolidating? What can any transcendency of inspiration give us better than life in Christ, than life spent in assimilating all men to Christ? Surely, in these circumstances, it is better to prize the good we have than fly to other that we know not of.

But Münzer not only appealed to the splendour of

his visions, he flung down the gage to Luther in the field of every-day duty. The ecstasies of spiritual exaltation resulted in gloom and moroseness when translated into the daily habit of these superlative Christians. In a word, a new ultra-Protestant asceticism was showing itself, and the faces which might be radiant when conversing with archangels in the courts of heaven wore an aspect of repulsive gravity in intercourse with ordinary men. In the visage of Münzer there was more to suggest the sullenness now associated in the general mind with Puritanism than to recall the pleasure of virtue or the radiance of heavenly joy. He scowled upon the jocund ways of Luther, and denounced the freedom of his manners on grounds akin to those on which the Pharisees arraigned the manners of Christ. He thanked God that he was not like this wine-bibbing Martin, this friend of publicans and sinners. Münzer was the father of all those Protestants whose religion has been Puritanically grave and sad, a thing of long faces and of dim and formal attire. The character of Luther and his teaching have the wholesome freshness and freedom of open air and common day, as against the sanctimonious gloom of crypt, cathedral, or conventicle. This new asceticism he involved in the same condemnation with the asceticism of the Papists. He did not pretend to be an angel upon earth; it was enough for him to be a man. He did not affect the super-terrestrial virtue of saints, monks, or Puritans, preferring a home-spun, useful, durable article, based on the great natural ordinances of morality.

At the time when Luther wrote the letter before us Münzer had not overtly proceeded to any act of war, and we cannot be sure that Luther knew him to have decided upon recourse to violence in any more serious form than image-breaking. But the published opinions of Münzer, as referred to by Luther, were extreme enough to include actual insurrection; and his censor, therefore, puts the case of his rising in revolt. "I have learned," says Luther, "and have also understood from their written statement, that they decline to treat the matter with words only, but intend to betake themselves to warlike violence, rising against the authorities and breaking out in actual war." The context shows that he believed the putting of these intentions into execution to be contingent on the adhesion of the multitude. It thus continued to rank among abstractions, not among facts, and could claim the liberty of abstractions to clothe themselves in words. Luther was willing to concede the claim. For thought and speech there was one law, that of toleration; he would courageously and liberally apply it: for stricken blow, whether its implement were the club of the image-smasher or the sword of the rebel, there was another law, physical force, and it too he adjured the princes to put into operation when the time came. Expressly warlike preparation was, however, equivalent to war, and the heads of the people were bound to look so far ahead, and to use such methods, as might be necessary to prevent a rising. But the general principle was clear —violence, and violence only, ought to be met with

force. It attests the tolerance, the brave and unaffected candour, of Luther, that in this letter he fervently pleads that the utmost liberty of speech may be accorded to these people. He expressly asks Frederick and John of Saxony to allow to Münzer all the toleration which he asks for himself. Let Münzer and his followers preach what they will. Let it be spirit against spirit; the right will conquer.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS.

Münzer was too far gone to be recalled to wisdom's ways by Luther's noble letter to the princes. Fanatic as he was, and though we need not doubt the sincerity of his belief that legions of angels would, if necessary, assist him in fighting the battles of the Lord, he knew that means are ordinarily required to produce ends. He had drawn into the net of his secret organisation immense numbers of peasants in the districts extending from the skirts of the Thuringian wood in the south to Mansfeld in the north. The multitude has in all ages delighted in following men who have pushed things to their utmost possible lengths, who have dealt in sweeping generalisations and promises of magnificent extent, and who have not teased the uneducated brain with qualifications, reserves, distinctions. "Monomaniacs," it has been said, "have a logic of their own." It consists in a daring and superb consistency. "You have only to admit the value of a principle in moderation and they insist on your devoting soul and body to that one principle alone. Go a little way with them, and they are angry with you if you don't start for the North Pole." Münzer gnashed his teeth against

Luther because he would not start for the North Pole; and tens of thousands of peasants, whose intense excitement laid them open to the contagion of monomania, hailed with rapture Münzer's promises to lead them to that fertile clime. Münzer was in all things for the whole, not the half. If you possess an inspired Bible, then take its every sentence, irrespectively of time, circumstances, or common sense, for an absolute command of God. Smash graven images, cut Amalekite throats. If Isaiah and Paul were inspired, if Jacob and Joseph dreamed dreams, why should not Thomas Münzer be also inspired, and his dreams and visions be fraught, like Joseph's, with promise of more than Egyptian harvests? This was a logic which the most puzzle-headed of clod-pates could comprehend—a logic on the lines of which the slowest intellect could advance as with seven-leagued boots.

"More than Egyptian harvests." Ay, and flesh-pots to boot. Throughout the centre and north of Germany, as well as in the south, it had flamed across the imagination of the hand-workers that some signal improvement in their earthly condition, some relaxation of the stern ordinance of toil, some shining realisation of the promise of this world, as well as the next, must be associated with the new proclamation of the infinite grace of God. Luther says nothing in his letter to the princes of community of goods as one of the objects of Münzer's organisation; but in the cottages of the peasantry this aspect of the business was not likely to be overlooked. Münzer, complete in cunning as in all other

characteristics of the sincere quack, found it an easy thing to let his mind, on this essential point, be perfectly well known, through the ministry of trusty agents, to the body of the peasants, while taking care to avoid committing himself publicly. It is established beyond dispute that before the appearance of Luther's letter it had been distinctly arranged by Münzer and his conclave that the land should be taken possession of, and cut up into portions to suit the wants of the militant saints, the landed gentry who proved recalcitrant being decapitated or hanged.

Luther had, from the first instant of his new spiritual birth, accepted the doctrine that life in Christ is life for the brotherhood—that Christ is loved not only in Himself, but in the persons of His people—that the highest worship of God is service of man, that selfism and diabolism are convertible terms. It was inevitable, therefore, that he should sympathise with all practical efforts to better the condition of the peasantry. But he denied that Christians have any commission to slay Canaanites; and he equally denied that the salvation offered by Christ ensures in all instances an abundance of the good things of this life.

Of course, he would have admitted that the promise of salvation is comprehensive of time as well as of eternity, of body and soul as well as of spirit. Salvation impedes every influence of body or soul that tends to make a man worthless; and reinforces all that tends to give him worth. If he is a dwarf, religion will not make him a giant; if he is a simpleton, religion

will not make him a man of sagacity; but, be his faculties weak or strong, they will work better under the rule of moral law than in moral anarchy. Christian salvation, on any theory of it which does not perversely and flagrantly reverse its main import, involves the unquestioning acceptance, as a practical standard of duty, of the Ten Commandments. That means, at lowest, that the man shall, in the set purpose and habit of his life, be upright, truthful, continent. These words express qualities that make for worldly prosperity as well as for righteousness. Accordingly, it has been proved by a wide experience that when Christian religion is genuine enough to imply obedience to the moral law, the promise of this world's wealth is fulfilled. The Christian monks of the mediæval age, when they gave themselves to industry, were prosperous as cultivators. The industrial success of the Jesuits was still more conspicuous. Members of the Society of Friends have been noted as successful traders. In all these cases the belief that God requires men not to steal was an essential factor in the resultant prosperity. The moral law of God is, in fact, the moral law of nature. It was not created at Sinai. It was simply swept into the system of revelation. In relation to the good things of this life, that law is true for Jew and Gentile, for Christian and atheist, alike; and the Rothschilds owe to it the great river of wealth that flows into their treasury exactly as a sincerely Christian baker in the New Cut, whom the costermongers of the neighbourhood know to be incapable of giving them

bad weight, owes to it the small rill of coin that tinkles into his till.

But this Christian promise of earth is entirely distinct from the Christian promise of heaven. And it was the heavenly promise that dwelt chiefly in Luther's mind. He sharply discriminated it from the other promise. He considered it infinitely superior to the other promise; and although he resolutely honoured the moral law of nature and of God, and did not make light of its rewards as dispensed in the providential government of the world, yet, for himself personally, he estimated one orient pearl of the heavenly riches, one dewdrop of the grace of God, as more precious than all the thrones and crown-jewels of the world. To this heavenly wealth he gave his heart, and frankly avowed that the heavenly promise is distinct from the earthly, that the heavenly riches may abound when the earthly riches fail, and that it is blasphemously sinful to accept, or pretend to accept, the heavenly promise with a view to filling the purse. In a hundred passages in his books and letters—passages expressing the essential spiritual life, the soul's soul, of the man—he speaks of the heavenly promise as linked with earthly affliction rather than earthly pleasure, as an experience of the power of the Cross of Christ, as possibly abounding, or even as chiefly abounding, at moments when the believer is suffering the pangs of penury, or disease, or violence. Some will say that this is illusion and fantasy. And for them it may be so. The language which Luther uses on the subject will

appear mystical and visionary to all except those who are able by sympathy to understand it. But no one who has known, in the provinces of philosophy or of poetry, the rapture that may reside in the passionate acceptance of some high ideal, will be wholly without a key to it. In the poetical and the philosophical, as well as in the religious province, the blessedness in question is wholly apart from the enjoyment of this world's goods. Goethe had it in view when he uttered what to some may seem the high-flown aphorism that the artist does not live by his art—if he does, he is an artizan. Burns knew what it meant when, amid anguish of straitened circumstances, he yet shuddered back, as from desecration, when payment was offered him for his songs. There are few, if any, provinces of human affairs in which the difference between the man who is a worldling and the man who is not a worldling is not practically infinite. But it is of the very essence of Christian religion to exalt the spiritual riches. In the eyes of Luther it was an almost inconceivably degrading notion of the heavenly promise made in the Gospel to apply it to the provision of peasant properties for all believers, or the turning of the great body of the population into rich, or at least well-to-do, people.

This was what Münzer did; or, if we would guard against the remotest possibility of doing him injustice, let us say that this was what the great multitude of peasants who flocked to him when he reared the standard of social insurrection understood and believed him to do. The Kingdom of Christ was to be established, no

doubt; the liberty of Gospel preaching was to be placed beyond attack; the people were to choose their own pastors; they were to have the spiritual enjoyment of saints: but they were also to have the sweat dried on their brows in the balmy air of an actual Eden; they were to ear the fields of a present Canaan; they were to be put into possession of the visible earth; and miracles were to be forthcoming to secure this result. If this was done for Jews, why should it not be done, asked Münzer, for Christians?

Alas, why not? There is but one argument valid to condemn poor Münzer, namely, that he *could not* work the miracle he promised, and that the belief of his being able to work it was ruinous. If any miracle is available to turn struggling peasants wholesale into well-to-do farmers, it would be stupendous folly, as well as inhuman cruelty, to forbid them to have the benefit of it. The only argument against world-regenerating quacks, who propose to make the few do the world's hand-labour, and the many eat the fruits thereof, which requires answer, is that the thing is impossible. "To change places"—that is always the quack-reformer's dream. He cannot work his miracle, and, what is more, one cannot conceive how even a miracle could put the many where the few are. It is indisputable that Christ never held out hope of such a miracle, and that He peremptorily refused to encourage those who came after Him in the idea that, by a stated supply of loaves and fishes, they might be relieved from the pressure of daily toil. The

language of Jesus was pervasively metaphorical; and infinite perversion has arisen from its being crudely literalised. Should reverent Reason, with her two handmaids, Candour and Common Sense, ever prevail so far with us as to induce the acceptance of Christ's words in the simplicity of their figurative meaning, we shall be as much ashamed of finding injunctions subversive of the laws of property in His figurative inculcation of the duty of benevolence, as of finding, in the profoundly expressive symbolism by which He urged His disciples to take in their inmost hearts the stamp of His character—to live His life and, to the utmost stretch of possibility, to *be* what He was—the strange and repulsive idea of eating His actual flesh and drinking His actual blood. By changing the spiritual into the material, and the figurative into the literal, the German peasants in 1525 were beguiled into transferring the New Testament descriptions of the glories of Christ's spiritual kingdom to a reign of militant saints, quartered upon lands that had been wrested from their lords.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE REVOLT.

It was in the far south of Germany, in the town of Waldshut, in those regions where the German tongue had found itself a domicile among the woods and waters of Switzerland, that the peasants first rose in arms. Münzer, as has been already mentioned, found time, at the juncture when Saxony was becoming too hot to hold him, to make an excursion to the inflamed districts. His idea probably was to form an alliance with Hubmeier, the leader of the southern revolt, and to proclaim from the north to the south of Germany the levelling of ranks and the division of property. In this project he was not successful, or not wholly successful. The views of the southern leader appear to have been of a less wildly excited and hysterical kind—to have had in them more of the element of worldly wisdom, and less of that of fanatical enthusiasm—than those of Münzer. The southern peasants expressly included in their manifesto a profession of willingness to withdraw any part of their demands which might be proved to be not in accordance with the Word of God. Certain of their proposals, relating to the constitution of the Reich, the unification of Germany, the assimilation of

the coinage in different states, have commended themselves to the wisdom of Germans in succeeding times. But extravagant and subversive fancies were also current among them. The rage was to level down to the plane of peasant existence, aristocracy of all kinds being abolished, walled towns proscribed, and only villages and cottages left in the land. As castle after castle fell into the hands of the advancing horde, and those hands became imbrued in blood, their temper grew more dark and savage. At length, in April, 1525, they perpetrated an act of atrocity which, though there is no reason to think that it was more criminal or more cruel than others among their performances, was so picturesquely pathetic in its accompaniments as to strike the imagination of Europe and fix itself in history. The Count of Helfenstein was taken prisoner. His wife, with his child in her arms, implored the peasants to spare him. But they pointed their spears at his breast, and transfixed him between two lines.

Münzer flitted back to the North German countries about the beginning of 1525, and took post finally in Mülhausen, where Pfeiffer, who was, if possible, in a state of wilder frenzy even than himself, conducted the evil business in his absence. There is not much in the first letters of Luther surviving to us from this year to show that at its commencement he had a vivid apprehension of the coming storm. In the first week of April, however, he had become alarmed, and his mind was made up as to the pernicious nature of the disturbances, which

had already, in South Germany, become exceedingly grave. Sad tidings, he informs a correspondent in a letter of April 3rd, had reached him from Thuringia. The world had formerly been full of devils, but they had been disembodied; now they were incarnate in human form.* On the 11th of the month he reports that Münzer is figuring as King and Kaiser at Mülhausen.† These touches from his flying pen are significant of much. One great body of the southern peasants had rolled away eastward to the Austrian kingdoms; another had streamed off northwards; and it was the dashing of this last flood upon the Thuringian highlands that Luther chronicled.

His own name, as has already been said, was placed by the peasants of the south in the forefront of their Twelve Articles. In one of their manifestoes they expressed a desire that he, Melanchthon, and others should be appointed to arbitrate upon their claims. But these were little more than complimentary references, intended rather to advertise to the world that the peasants counted themselves allies of Luther and Melanchthon, than evincing any serious wish to submit their cause to adjudication by the Wittenberg doctors. Luther answered the appeal. He had gone to Eisleben, by request of Count Albert of Mansfeld, to set on foot a school under the superintendence of his friend Agricola; and there, on the 16th of April, he struck off in rapid vehemence of word and deliberate earnestness of thought his exhortation to both parties to

* De Wette, 689. † De Wette, 691.

make peace. The sentiments of this address have been sufficiently indicated. It has never been denied that Luther rebukes with Nathan-like honesty and sternness the selfishness, the harshness, the cupidity of the nobles and the clergy, their opposition to the Gospel, their oppression of the people. Nor can it be called in question that he adjures them to come to terms with the peasants by a generous consideration of their claims, many of which he pronounces just. He is equally explicit in condemning the peasants for having proceeded to violence. The ruling orders are, he avers, appointed by God. It is not permissible, even though they have come short of their duty, to attempt their displacement by violence. The power is the ordinance of God.

No colourable pretext can be deduced from this piece for imputing to Luther either indifference to the sufferings of the peasants or obsequiousness to the nobles. It ought to be remembered that he could not but see in the insurrection the outcome and effervescence of elements of mischief, anarchy, and uproar, with which he had been in conflict from the day when he stepped down from the Wartburg. This was the spirit which, with a pang of torturing agony, compared with which that of taking his place at the stake would have been slight, he had recognised as the Satan of discord presenting himself among the sons of God. And yet he was so careful to distinguish between what might be good in the rising of the peasants from what was palpably bad, that the best thing the peasants could possibly

have done for themselves would have been to listen to him, and to accept his mediation between them and their lords. Had their appeal to him been a grave and practical matter, instead of the mere waving of a flag, he would have lent them his earnest advocacy to procure for them all that was best and most rational in their demands. A free Gospel and the right to choose their own pastors—these he would of course have demanded for them; and he, a peasant born, was not the man to withhold fellow-feeling from peasants asking for remission of tithe, or tax, or degrading servitude, or grinding usury, or for leave to take those fish of the lake, or beasts and birds of the forest, of which, as he would agree with them in maintaining, God gave the dominion not to nobles only, but to men in common.

The peasants, however, took no notice of his admonition. And every messenger, as he arrived from the villages of the Black Forest, from the sources of the Danube and the Rhine, from Frankenland and Schwabenland, brought news of castles burning, of monasteries sacked, of lords and retainers massacred. While Luther was awaiting the effect of his remonstrance upon the peasants, the tragedy of the Weinsberg, of which the unfortunate Count of Helfenstein was the victim, made all sane men in Germany shudder. And Münzer was now reaching the paroxysmal point of his madness. The astounding extravagance of spiritual pride to which he had attained, and the firmness of his persuasion that one prophet was as good as another,

may be estimated from the saying imputed to him that if God would not speak with him as readily as with Abraham he would spit in His face.* Münzer took pains to secure himself against the charge of sparing Amalek. He shrieked to his followers to rush upon the enemies of the Lord, to slay, and slay, and tire not. The sword of Gideon was in his hand, and he would lead them to victory. On! on! on! No weakness! Never mind the wail of the godless. Though they beg in friendly tones, though they cry and whimper like children, pity not. Was it not thus that God commanded His people to slay the Canaanites? On, on, while the fire is hot. Down with the castles and their inmates. God is with you. On! on! †

And so the work went forward. Infected with their leader's monomania, the wild horde raged and destroyed in this direction and in that. More than forty convents were wrecked in Thuringia, and a goodly proportion of castles. Münzer hated Luther with frantic intensity, and perhaps this had something to do with his special wrath against mining populations unless they arrayed themselves among his saints. One great division of the plunderers stormed into the district of Mansfeld, and Count Albert found himself suddenly called upon to perform the perilous duty of defending his territories from devastation.

Then Luther showed himself in two ways. His

* The remark is coarser in the German—unquotable even in the original.

† Walch, in his XVI. vol., gives Münzer's letters and addresses, the famous-infamous "*Dran, dran, dran*" manifesto among them.

anger against the peasants waxed hot, if indeed anger is the right word for a feeling qualified by a vague apprehension that they were mad. He referred to them as rabid dogs, and called loudly upon all sane men who could fight to treat them as such. In the second place, he stood by his lord, the Count Albert of Mansfeld, in his hour of need, as a true knight ought. Taking his life in his hand, he proceeded from town to town, ascending the pulpit everywhere, and inveighing against the insurrection.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DEATH OF FREDERICK.

While the flame of sedition and fanatical insurrection, advancing from the south, threatened to envelop North Germany in conflagration, a prince who had long striven to hold in check the elements of unrest in Deutschland, and who had hoped never to see the present evil day, was lying down to die. Frederick of Saxony, never an intellectually strong man, had felt for a considerable time—we may in fact venture to extend the retrospect to the date of the issue of Luther's Theses—that the march of events was getting beyond his control. His perfect moral heroism—the unsullied purity of his wish to show himself a prince by rendering princely service to his nation—had always preserved his dignity, and had guarded him from gross or vulgar mistakes. His reign, in its most notable part, is an historical demonstration that, for a sovereign prince, "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God," is to be a noble sovereign. But his generation, and historians down to our time, have hardly been felicitous in calling him Frederick the Wise. Frederick the Just, Frederick the Good, Frederick the Peaceable, he was; but wisdom, unless we concede the high designation to a quality

more passive and negative than wisdom ought to be, cannot be claimed as his characteristic. Luther was a spiritual force too great for Frederick's managing. The Lutheran Reformation was a phenomenon too new, too splendid, too terrible, for his political astronomy. He was of great use to Luther, and Luther knew it; but the man of a thousand years—the religious genius to whom civilisation owed a new departure—could not but chafe under the control of a man of blameless, beautiful, but quite unoriginal character like Frederick.

Luther had been deeply sensible of Frederick's good intentions in sending him to the Wartburg; and yet he would have sincerely preferred to go back at once to Wittenberg, face all risks, and remain in the front of the battle. He never *quite* forgave Frederick for laying a kind hand on his bridle-rein and conducting him out of the fray. And Luther's instinct was perhaps right. It might have been better for Germany, for Europe, for all nations at this hour, if Luther had not at that particular moment been spirited away to the Wartburg. Left to themselves, with Carlstadt to push himself into Luther's place as leader, the Wittenberg doctors rather lost their heads. At first Luther on the Wartburg shared their heat, moving on in some departments of theology at a pace that was for him unusually rapid. Then the intolerable eccentricities of Carlstadt, stimulated to the utmost pitch by the Zwickau prophets, startled him into partial reaction, arresting his advance in the quest, previously so calm, so luminous, so brave, for new

truth, and preparing and presaging the dogmatism of a later date. Frederick might have done better for the Reformation if he had left Luther, as Luther devoutly wished to be left, to the guardianship of God.

Be this as it may, Frederick never was in entire and cordial sympathy with Luther after his return from the Wartburg. He wrote to his brother John about the insurgent peasants in terms of sympathetic pity which, to Luther, may well have seemed to savour of imbecility. To us, however, they cannot fail to endear the dying Prince. The toiling masses, Frederick reminded his brother, were severely pressed upon both by the secular and the spiritual lordships. "If God wills to have it so," he meekly added, "things will turn out in a way to bring about the government of the common man." A prophecy, might we not say, from the lips of the dying Frederick, of the representative democracies of modern times! He was anxious that as much concession as was possible, consistently with safety, should be made to the peasants.

Difficult as it had been for him to wean himself from the system which he had reverenced in youth, and though he was tottering towards the grave before the treasury of relics, by which in his early manhood he had set so much store, was finally dismantled, he did, nevertheless, firmly believe that God had wrought a great redemption by Martin Luther, and that the sole method of salvation was by faith in Christ. He had never exchanged a word with Luther; never, except once at Worms in the presence of the Emperor, seen

his face. But on his death-bed he longed to hear the voice of the great preacher of righteousness. It could not be. Luther could not turn from the urgent service of his nation even to wait upon his dying sovereign. But Spalatin, Frederick's bosom friend and spiritual counsellor, was with him to the last. He testified his final assent to the Reformation by taking the Sacrament in both kinds. In the first week of May, 1525, at his castle of Lochau, he breathed his last.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MÜNZER GOES DOWN.

It was in those days and hours when Frederick was looking steadfastly into the eyes of death, reading in them Christ's promise of peace, that the final agony of the Peasants' War shook Germany as with great throbs of earthquake. Duke John took the place of his dying brother in council and in the field, with heroic courage, yet perfect humanity, not forgetting for a moment the claims of justice and compassion. Gathering, from town and fortress, what armed force could be had, he looked eagerly round to Philip of Hesse, to Henry of Brunswick, to any ally that held out hope of honourable help. But the prospect was appalling. No adequate force could at once be assembled, and great masses of infuriated peasants were storming about on this hand and on that. The number of insurgents was estimated at above 32,000 in the districts between Gotha and Vogtland, distributed in bodies of from 2,000 to 8,000. The old feudal array had fallen into desuetude; and, indeed, those peasants and their sons who in feudal times would have rallied round Duke John were now in the insurgent ranks. He tried to enter into negotiation. The peasants were profuse of offers to hurt no

one, if only they were allowed to have their own way, and to enter at once into possession of the country. This profession of innocent intentions Luther denounced as, under the circumstances, mere devilish mockery (*Teufels Spott*). "Is it not," he exclaims, "doing harm to hunt out the nobles and strike them dead? If they mean to harm no one why do they congregate? why do they demand that all power shall be yielded up to them? To harm no one, and yet take possession of everyone's goods!—why, the devil himself, if only we gave him in all things his own way, would promise not to harm us." "So says the highway robber to the pacific waggoner, 'Give me all you have, and drive where I tell you, and you shall have your life.' Oh, beautiful innocence, how finely does the devil dress up his murderous ministers! But with God's gracious help, rather would I lose a hundred lives than countenance their iniquity or speak them fair."*

It was in the highest degree satisfactory to him that Count Albert of Mansfeld stood firmly by the side of Duke John. Albert had entered into conference with the peasants of his neighbourhood, had generously acceded to their request for a removal of grievances, and had received a promise from them to be true to him to the death. Straightway, after making these professions, they began to wreck the monasteries of the district. The multitude was in a dangerous mood—full of suspicion, exasperation, and the maddening hope of exchanging places with their lords. Luther says that,

* De Wette, 696.

taking his life in his hand, he went among them, but found them perverse, arrogant, stiffnecked, becoming more proud in their frenzy the more they were spoken with. Meanwhile every wind from the south came laden with new tales of atrocity; the authorities in Weimar, unequal to the emergency, seemed in a trance of incapable horror; the peasants appeared to be on the highway to victory. Amid the tumult Carlstadt becomes momentarily visible, mounted on some appropriate stump, in peasant's grey coat and white hat, haranguing the crowd. Whether it was that he had again, as in the first frenzy of his fraternisation with the Zwickau prophets, quite lost his senses, or whether it was that he held the cooler wisdom with which he had repelled Münzer's invitation to prepare for insurrection to have been rebuked by what his distracted vision might take for the palpable fulfilment of Münzer's prophecies in the triumph of the peasants, certain it is that he was at this time understood to have cast in his lot with the warrior saints. We may, indeed, be quite sure that his inventive genius provided him with some view of the situation peculiar to himself. The multitude which followed the peasant standard was a mixed multitude, and we know from Luther's letters that some of those who took part in the movement disclaimed sympathy with the violence of Münzer. Luther pleaded earnestly on behalf of such loyal and peaceable persons as had been forced to join the rebel ranks. Against the desperate fanatics he issued a final address, brief, compact, and terrible. Calling upon all

children of God to withdraw from them, he poured the vials of his wrath upon the "murderous robber-gang" that, under blasphemous pretext of promoting Christ's cause, was subverting the order of human society and turning everything into chaos and conflagration. They were condemned already, he said, by the law of God and of the Kaiser, and it was the duty of every man, in proportion to his power, not waiting for official direction, to attack and exterminate them. When a town was on fire, no man able to throw water on it could without sin refrain from doing so.

The decisive moment was now at hand. The new Elector of Saxony, who had been joined by Philip of Hesse, Henry of Brunswick, and Duke George, and who was gallantly supported not only by Count Albert of Mansfeld, Luther's friend, but by Count Ernst of Mansfeld, who was resolutely Popish, advanced, in the second week of May, 1525, towards one of the largest bodies of peasants. They had taken post at Frankenhausen. The princes had recourse once more to negotiation, and there was some prospect of a peaceable settlement being effected. But Münzer, who had been in some other quarter, entered the camp at this juncture at the head of the men of Mühlhausen. He came promising victory, declaring himself armed with the sword of Gideon, and breathing destruction to Amalek. The peasants, waxing bold in the contagion of his maniacal exultation, broke off all conference with the princes.

Münzer, who had not been so fooled by his fanaticism but that he could take rational enough measures to

prepare for his rising, did not now rely exclusively upon miraculous aid. He had taken care to supply his tumultuary troops with cannon. But the disorder of his mind, and the general military incompetence of the leaders of the peasants, are attested by the fact that though the big guns were there, the powder with which to fire them had been forgotten. All accounts tend to show that Münzer was now in his wildest mood of paroxysmal frenzy, staking all on some such miraculous interference, on behalf of the peasants, as he had taught himself and them to expect. He bade his followers look up for that sign of God in the heavens which announced their invincibility, pretending to discover it either in a rainbow or a halo round the sun which was visible at the critical moment when the princes advanced to the attack. The peasants were protected by an entrenchment constructed of waggons and other *impedimenta*, a form of camp as old as the days of Tacitus and Hermann. The artillery of the princes tore a path through this obstacle, and the cavalry charged in upon the main body of the peasants. As they advanced, the peasants attempted to raise the hymn, "Come, Holy Spirit!" But their loose array was broken in a moment, and the battle soon became a massacre. More than half the number of the rebels were slain. Münzer escaped from the field. His mania was cured, but the foxy cunning which was in the nature of the man survived. He crept into a house, got into bed, and feigned sickness. But he was taken, and most justly condemned to death. The delirium that had possessed him for years

subsided, and the religion of his boyhood returned. He took the Sacrament in one kind, and died a Roman Catholic.

There are things on which all comment is drowned in tears. Who can express the pathos of that hymn of the peasants, "Come, Holy Spirit!" as the horsemen dashed in upon them?

That Münzer made a poor end must not be held conclusive as impeaching his sincerity. He had a narrow brain to begin with; the agitation of the time intoxicated him; and when the visions of his frenzy vanished he awoke to the consciousness that he had been acting the madman. There was truth, doubtless, in his bitter answer to those who asked him why he had wrought such woe, that the peasants would have their way. The noble leader of a democracy is bound to save his followers from themselves. He is to prove his fidelity to the multitude by having regard to their true interests, by standing stubbornly to principles which he knows to be true, by choosing rather to see their eyes inflamed with fury against him, or to hear them shouting around him on his way to the guillotine, than to humour their fancies or to nurse their hallucinations. Of all the lessons of his life, Luther has left none more grandly significant for these democratic ages than that brave independence, that heroic stability and self-respect, in the leadership of men, which formed so bold a contrast to the suicidal compliance that Münzer confessed.

It was natural that Münzer should vehemently hate

Luther. He called him "Doctor Liar," "Doctor Ludibrii," "flattering scoundrel." Luther was the raven sent out from the ark (*der schwarze Kulckrabe*); he, Münzer, was the dove.* A slight examination of the curious piece in which these epithets occur, and of others by Münzer, enables us to perceive that his system was not without method and articulation. He assigned immense importance to the Old Testament. Unintelligent minds, intensely impressed with belief in infallible verbal inspiration, will always ask whether God's directions to the Jews, in the matter of hewing Agags and conquering and dividing Canaans, can have become obsolete, and whether the godless do not need to be smitten hip and thigh in modern times as well as in ancient. Luther made short work of such argumentation, simply laying down the principle that Moses has no place in the New Testament (*Im Neuen Testament hält und gilt Moses nicht*). Münzer had, however, an ingenious way of arming the Christian democracy with weapons of war. The Church meant the people. To the Church, in the sense of the *Gemeinde* (congregation), were committed not only the keys but the sword. It was their part to execute the Lord's judgments; and the customary fondness of the multitude for witnessing executions was, he suggested, a right and proper testimony to this fact. All those passages in which judgment is denounced against evil-doers, as when fear and trembling are pointed out as their lot, and the fowls of heaven are

* *Hoch verursachte Schutzrede' und Antwort wider das gaistlose sanftlebende Fleisch zu Wittenberg, &c.*

invited to eat their flesh, and the beasts of the field to drink their blood, were interpreted by Münzer into indications of the will of God as to how His saints ought to treat the wicked.

Without question the Münzerian idea, if it were put into practice by great men, might be one of the most elevated and inspiring that can be presented to the imagination. That right should be clothed in might, that good men should bear the sword, that justice should not be leaden-footed but swift, and that evil should not be at liberty to exist in God's world—this is indeed a stirring idea. The reign of the saints, as conceived by the noblest of the Puritans, was something of this kind. But it is at best hardly a Christian idea. Luther's position was the true one. Christians fight with the sword of the Spirit. "My kingdom is not of this world." These words can have no rational meaning if ministers of the Gospel are to enlist troops, and win Christ's kingdom by steel weapons.

But we are never to forget that Münzer claimed powers which the Puritans no more than Luther pretended to. Münzer was under the illusion that he could work miracles. Luther never imagined for a moment that he possessed this power. Nor did he fancy himself miraculously inspired. He believed himself providentially sent by God, and created anew by grace. But his sound brain repelled all illusive notions of miraculous inspiration. Münzer's quasi-prophetic ravings were falsehoods which had on the multitude a maddening effect. The people thought that balls would

not pierce the saints of the Lord. In estimating the rightness or wrongness of Luther's hard words spoken of Münzer and his peasants, we ought to recollect that not even in the paroxysms of the Jacobin terror in France were great masses of men in arms with the object of dividing property. Münzer proposed to do by fire, sword, and miracle what the Convention and the Government of Robespierre did not quite venture to attempt even by law. It may be unduly harsh in expression, but it is literally true to fact, that Münzer excited his peasants to sheer frenzy, and that mad peasants, with arms in their hands, are as much more dangerous than mad dogs, as men are superior in powers of mischief to four-footed animals.

If Luther's words stung like scorpions, he was in action the most forgiving, the least spiteful of men. Carlstadt, whose theology had often prompted Luther to think him possessed of one or more devils, and whose recent caperings had brought him into serious trouble, had the mother-wit to betake himself, when the hope of victory faded and the danger of punishment had come, not like Hutten to Erasmus, but to the often reviled Luther. And Luther received him with a smile of forgiveness, and gave him refuge in the convent until the peril had gone by.

# Book XII.

## KATIE.

1525.

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## KATIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LIGHT AT LAST.

In one of the most terrible conflicts in which man ever engaged Luther was victorious. He had taken his life in his hand and confronted the dragon of anarchy. He knew what he had done, and regarded his victory with serene and solemn pride. "It was I who slew Münzer. His blood is on these hands. I slew him because he was bent on slaying my Christ." *

He was now, in this year 1525, in his forty-second year. His life had been one of toil, agitation, strain on every faculty of body and mind. Of himself he had taken no thought. Gain, comfort, earthly reward in any kind, he had never looked for. The idea of building for himself some nest of pleasantness—of seeking some refuge from the consuming stress of service for God and man—did not occur to him. A nature so constant and so sound would naturally thirst for repose, but he asked

* *Also hab ich Münzern getödtet, dess Tod liegt auf meinem Halse. Ich hab es aber darum gethan, denn er wollte meinen Christum tödten.* —Tischreden, vol. iii.

for no remission of toil in this world; and his brightest hope in the way of reward was that his Lord might think him worthy of the crown of martyrdom and seal him to the heavenly rest.

But on one thing he was inflexibly resolved—that he would not omit any part of the testimony which it lay in his power to bear against the Roman system; and in the practical working of Romanism nothing was for him more malignantly bad than the enforced celibacy of the clergy. The two pillars of the Papacy against which he, with what approximation to Samson's power was attainable, would press were, first, the mercenary mass, and, second, the pseudo-chastity that dishonoured marriage and exalted celibacy.* Suddenly, therefore, at the very time when the Peasants' War was approaching its crisis, and the probability that he might fall a victim to its fury forced itself upon his mind, the thought rose in him like an inspiration that he would add deed to word in his testimony against celibacy. "To spite the devil," he wrote, "I will take my Katie to wife before I die." †

Accustomed as he was to regard himself as expressly called by God to smite the Papal Antichrist, he habitually cherished the opinion that his life was aimed at by Satan. He had now excited to the fiercest pitch of resentment the Antichrist of spiritual lordship—usurpation and false doctrine—on the one side, and, on the other, the Antichrist of pseudo-inspiration—raging fanaticism, lawless insolence calling itself Christian

* Tischreden, vol. iv. † De Wette, 696.

liberty, and rapine disguised in the sheep's clothing of saintliness. Between the Pope and Münzer he felt that his life might easily fall a sacrifice. He resolved therefore—so he stated subsequently *—that if he found "that fell sergeant, death" laying his arrest upon him, he would have some pure maiden brought to his bedside, and would be betrothed to her there and then, giving her the customary marriage gifts, thus announcing his utter and eternal repudiation of any vows which had withheld him from honouring as it deserved God's holy ordinance of matrimony.

And who was Katie? She was one of many young women whom Luther had found himself obliged to look after in those years. Born in 1499, at Steinlausitz on the Mulde, of a noble but not very wealthy Misnian family,† Catherine von Bora had been put at ten years of age into the convent of Nimptsch, near Grimma. There she had been under the superintendence of Staupitz, and may well have owed to him her access to the idea that salvation is wholly of grace. It is legitimate to surmise that when Luther discharged the duties of Vicar as Staupitz's deputy in 1516, his fiery words and intense personality may have done more to stir thought in Catherine, then in the flush of early nun-hood and opening womanhood, than she was aware of. In the following year the news reached the convent that the same Luther of Wittenberg, who had acted as Staupitz's substitute, had written up, in words with which all Germany was ringing, that

* In the Tischreden. † Karl Zimmermann, vol. iv.

repentance was a spiritual work, that salvation meant Christ living in the soul, that all the mechanical routine and taskwork of the convent were but a lighting of candles at noonday to help the sun. Catherine, who had certainly, at ten, been able to yield no intelligent consent to being shut up in a convent, would, at eighteen, hear of these things with eager concern, and talk over them with her sister nuns. When Luther was snatched away into the Wartburg Catherine was a woman of twenty-two, vigorous in body and in mind, cool of nerve and clear of head, singularly capable of judging whether she ought to remain in the convent or to go out into the world. At last, in the spring of 1523, in company with eight other nuns, she left her cage and took flight for Wittenberg. She obtained a situation in the family of the municipal secretary, Reichenbach, a man of good position and unimpeachable respectability. She moved in the best society of Wittenberg, the painter Cranach, not only a distinguished artist but an eminent citizen, being, with his wife, among her particular friends. When Christian, the ex-King of Denmark, paid Cranach a visit, in 1523, he marked his appreciation of Catherine by presenting her with a gold ring.

Inevitably a prominent—extremely prominent—place in Catherine's firmament was occupied by Luther. He had eclipsed, in reputation and in potency of influence, every living man she had heard of; he had revolutionised her native land; and he had changed the current of her own life. Yet she was not in the least

fluttered out of her bright feminine composure by the presence and intimate society of this great man, whose goodness did not make him the less enchanting. One of the most subtly sweet of all the forms of spiritual passion—let us call it spiritual, without microscopic inquiries as to the possible presence in it of less ethereal elements—is that with which a noble girl regards the man who has been in spiritual matters her guide and friend. George Eliot owed much of her power to her sympathetic understanding of this feeling, and has portrayed it at its best in the relations between Savonarola and Romola, and at its worst between Gwendolen and Deronda. Too great proneness to this spiritual passion implies hysterical excitability and unsoundness of moral fibre; those, on the other hand, who are wholly insensible to its attractiveness are apt to be too hard, and to stiffen in womanhood into conventional formality, primness, and prose. Catherine von Bora had this peculiarity—that she fell decidedly short in the sensibilities, the aspirings, the morally-sublime ambitions of the Saint Theresa type of woman; and yet did not by any means sink to the level of mere commonplace womanhood. Genuine Theresas are rare. Counterfeit Theresas, affected Theresas, soft-sighing and priest-worshipping Theresas, are not rare. If Catherine was below saintship, she was above any of its counterfeits. To Luther, when he first knew her, she seemed "proud," and he conceived something like a prejudice against her. This we may safely take to mean that she had no special difficulty in maintaining her self-possession in his presence—did not approach

him with that homage, conveyed in bated breath, in downcast eye, in reverential footfall, which, without being quite aware of it, he would naturally expect from young women. Nor is there proof of her having consulted him touching her spiritual state, or shown the slightest disposition to make him the depositary of spiritual confidences. His spiritual influence on her would be none the less real on this account. She moved apart in womanly completeness, her faculties adequate to her needs, having no doubt as to her duty, and making no fuss about doing it. Perhaps Luther had been influenced by recollection of her noble blood when he pronounced her proud. But the main significance of his remark lies in its suggestion of a self-sufficing completeness and dignity about Catherine which made her difficult to patronise, incapable of the maudlin graciosities and vapid reverences of feminine hero-worship.

Deeply concerned in seeing her permanently and honourably provided for, Luther heard, with a satisfaction which there is no reason to think insincere, that she seemed likely to be married to Jerome Baumgärtner, a young gentleman of Nürnberg who frequented Wittenberg in the character of an earnest adherent of the Evangelical party. Catherine's heart had been touched, and when Baumgärtner returned to his own town and broke off the connection she was grieved to a degree that temporarily affected her health. But this was exactly the sort of disappointment which her sound and elastic nature would triumph over; and we find her, towards the end of 1524, playing no neutral or tacit

part in certain negotiations going forward on the subject of her settlement in marriage. Luther wrote to Baumgärtner, hinting that if he was in earnest about Catherine he had better look sharp, a rival being in the field. This rival was not himself, but Dr. Glatz, pastor at Orlamünde, who, with Luther and Amsdorf to second his proposals, doubtless believed himself on the way to success. With the crystalline clearness of perception which always characterised her, Catherine saw that in the good-natured officiousness and too business-like practicality of those gentlemen matters of quite vital interest to her might be compromised. Luther, she had no doubt perceived, generally effected his purposes, and the idea that he might make up his mind to see her wedded to Glatz startled her into prompt and decisive action. She would marry no man whom she could not love, and some instinct, justified by Glatz's subsequent history, told her that she never could love him. In justice to him as well as to herself, she was bound to put an end to all possibility of misconception on the point. She begged Amsdorf, accordingly, to tell Luther that she would on no account marry Glatz. Most girls would have said no more. But Catherine knew that Luther and Amsdorf had a right to expect from her no petulant opposition to their friendly plans, no dainty fastidiousness like that of the romantic love-sick young lady who will have none but the fairy prince of her dreams. She added, therefore, that she would marry Luther, or Amsdorf himself, if they chose, but Glatz never.

*Sancta simplicitas!* "Hence, bashful cunning! And prompt me, plain and holy innocence! I am your wife, if you will marry me."

Are we at liberty to suppose that there was, in the association of Amsdorf with Luther, in Katie's offer of her hand, the smallest possible particle of art to temper its artlessness, of ingenuity to qualify its ingenuousness? Amsdorf was a good enough kind of man, an evangelical preacher, a sound reformer, a trusted friend of Luther's. But his place of abode was Magdeburg; his acquaintance with Catherine must have been slight as compared with Luther's; and it seems never to have occurred either to Amsdorf himself or to anyone else that the question of his marrying her could be serious. His name, probably, was introduced only as an artless-artful, entirely innocent screen, behind which mention might be made of Luther. So it appears to have been understood by everyone.

Here was news for Martin! "I did never think to marry." He could say this as truly as Benedick, when the tale of Beatrice's love had just penetrated to his heart. There is no higher authority in love-lore than that of him who delineates the change wrought in Benedick's feelings towards Beatrice by the conviction that he might, if he pleased, get her to wife. Nor have we to dive very deep into the subtleties of human nature to find cause for believing that when Luther learned that the climax of Catherine's aspiring was to be married to *him*, he might cease to object sharply to her pride. That a fine girl knows *her* superiority to most people,

and yet owns *his* superiority to her, taming her wild heart to his loving hand, is the reverse of offensive to any man. And Luther could not but perceive, when he thought the matter out a little, that Katie had notable attractions. Herr Köstlin says that with reference to women, Martin was not wood or stone. Decidedly not. His temperament, if he had not been caught up in the fiery chariot of prophetic inspiration, would probably have resembled that of Burns. Katie was thought by some to be beautiful—otherwise Erasmus could not have edged a taunt against Luther by saying that he had married a "wonderfully pretty girl." Maimbourg the Jesuit says she was very good-looking, but he may possibly have had some Jesuitic intent in so saying, for he adds that Luther was "mortally in love with her," which he certainly was not. Her features were comely, but nowhere would they have been thought regularly beautiful. The eyes, without being piquantly intellectual, or glowingly spiritual and exalted, were eminently adapted to express feminine orderliness and firmness, and to be homes of wifely and maternal affection. Complexion clear, brow unwrinkled, fresh and calm—the kind of brow Scott had in view when he made Bailie Nicol Jarvie speak of the "brent brow" of his Matty:—

> "Brent brow and lily skin,
> A leal heart and a true within."

The couplet as a whole is, in fact, singularly applicable to Katie. Her face gives no evidence either of

imaginative sensibility, or of religious enthusiasm, or of such curiosity as might take interest in the theology of the time. That she left her convent under the strong displeasure, as may be inferred from their standing aloof from her, of her relatives, and that she loved the great reformer, must be held to prove that she was strongly anti-Papal, earnestly evangelical; but there was no trace of disputatiousness in her nature, no tincture of speculative doubt. By a transition as easy and effortless as that by which a healthy child passes from slumber to wakefulness she emerged from the superstitious dusk of Papalism into the breezy light of the Protestant morning. Kate had a genius for quietly succeeding; never failed in her life; and effected all transitions and transactions with a *minimum* of fuss.

> "Seldom she altered feature, hue, or muscle,
> And could be very busy without bustle."

Such was the emancipated nun whom the emancipating monk, amid the horrible eclipse and earthquake of the Peasants' War, suddenly announced his intention to marry.

The affair had matured with rapidity. It was in March, 1525, that our Benedick definitely learned that he "could an' if he would" have that proud, shy, superior girl. Luther had the very crash of worlds about his head, but we are at liberty to suppose that he found an hour now and then for the blissful work of wooing. At all events, there arose a complete understanding between the two, and so early

as the fourth of May he could speak, not without an accent of jubilance, of *his* Katie, proclaiming to all the world that if he were to die in the immediate future he would at least leave his name to a wife.

Straightway a clamour and an uproar of surprise, disapproval, and consternation began which has not yet quite howled and whimpered itself into silence. Of course the Papists were incensed. Antichrist, they said, could not fail to be born from the sacrilegious union of a monk and a nun. "If so," slyly remarked Erasmus, "there must have been a good many antichrists born before now." But not a few, even among the Protestants, were scandalised. Melanchthon felt uneasy on the subject. Jerome Schurf, the jurist, predicted that Luther's marriage would wreck the good he had previously accomplished. The time was pronounced inappropriate. Frederick, who for so many years had shielded Luther, was sinking in those very days into the grave. Germany was the scene of a frightful social struggle. Was this the season to steal away to the selfishness and solitude of hymeneal enjoyment?

There was one, however, who entertained no misgivings, and to his approval Luther attached more importance than to that of all the theologians, Papist and Protestant, in Europe. Old John Luther had no feeling but profound satisfaction on the subject of his son's marriage. Step for step John had accompanied Martin, with clear acquiescence in his successive attacks upon the Papacy, and had of late been showing signs of impatience at his not taking a wife. The last link of that

chain by which, much to the chagrin of old John, he had bound himself on entering the convent was now to be broken off; and Luther heard with unaffected indifference, tempered slightly with scorn, the titterings, taunts, and clamours of others, as he fell back on three grand sources of approbation, his conscience, his father, and his God.

By the law and usage of Germany, the one essential requisite to a true marriage was that the man and the woman should accept each other, in word and deed, as husband and wife. If their having done so could be established by sufficient proof, the marriage was valid in the absence of even a single personal witness. Luther, anxious doubtless to lay stress upon the civil and non-sacramental nature of marriage, took Katie to wife on the 13th of June, 1525, in the presence of three or four of his most intimate friends. These were Bugenhagen and Jonas, two eminent clergymen of Wittenberg, and Luke Cranach the artist, and his wife, who were, as has been mentioned, particular friends of the bride. Herr Köstlin looks upon it as open to no reasonable question—and I agree with him—that a brief marriage ceremony, accompanied by prayer, took place.

The solemnity of the thirteenth was followed up by a more public but yet modest festivity on the twenty-seventh. Though the marriage had taken place before, Luther attached considerable importance to this second celebration, as blazoning to all the world that he had become a married man. Matthesius, though laying stress on the previous marriage, as solemnised in the

name and on the Word of Christ in the presence of good people, states that there was subsequently a regular going to church and public marriage.* But Matthesius did not know Luther at this time, and did not write down what he may afterwards have heard from eye-witnesses, or from Luther himself, until the latter had been dead for nearly twenty years. Herr Köstlin quotes Matthesius's statement without challenge, and Herr Köstlin's authority is high; but he does not say that he positively endorses it. The point is not of much importance; but expressions used in Luther's letters between the thirteenth and twenty-seventh of June seem to me to exclude the idea of a second ceremony and of a going to church. On the fifteenth he wrote to his friends Rühel, Thür, and Müller, men of good standing at Mansfeld, inviting them to his "little festivity and house-warming," and asking them to bring, if possible, his father and mother with them. He would venture, he says, to ask the Counts Albert and Gebhard of Mansfeld, did he not know that they were engrossed by public duty. But what concerns us is that he writes expressly as a married man. In the letter to Spalatin he speaks of his "marriage" as of something that has taken place. In the letter to Amsdorf he calls Catherine his wife. In none of these letters is there a syllable that would lead his correspondents to think he wanted them to be present at an ecclesiastical ceremony. But

* *Einen öffentlichen Kirchgang und ehrliche Hochzeit.*—Matth. 5te Predigt.

they reveal, more distinctly perhaps than I have enabled the reader as yet to realise, the exact nature of the complex motives that influenced him in his proceedings. He uses these words to Spalatin: "I have shut the mouths of those who have been defaming me in relation to Catherine." A telling hint! We find, in the letter to the Mansfeld three, that his father has been even more pressingly urging matrimony than there seemed reason to expect. Alarmed, we may suppose, by Martin's frequent expressions of a belief, hope, or presentiment that his death was near, he had grown anxious lest his son should pass away without progeny. Luther connects with the mention of his father's urgency in pushing on the marriage a reference to the "evil tongues"* of calumny which could not be silenced. He does not, indeed, say that the malevolent rumours stood in any relation of cause and effect to his father's wish to see him married, but he places the two things in immediate juxtaposition. The main and grand motive of his sudden determination to marry, namely, to enrage Satan by trampling into the dust his malignant device of clerical celibacy, is, of course, always present. But the other expressions, corroborated perhaps by Maimbourg's remark about Luther's having been mortally in love, put it beyond question that his courtship of Katie had attracted notice in Wittenberg, and caused the evil tongues aforesaid to wag. It would be pleasant to think that, with the ardour and

* De Wette, 715. I adopt Walch's reading in preference to De Wette's.

impetuosity by which he was so deeply characterised, Luther had passed rapidly from interested but almost unimpassioned esteem for Katie into the limitless admiration and infinite rapture of accepted love. But we may be almost quite certain that he had no such experience. One reason for this decision is that in the afternoon of his life he spoke of never having known what it was to enjoy greatly—to be as happy as possible. Another is that there is not a trace of unusual excitement in the letters written at this time, and that he describes his feelings in terms that attest a manly and rational affection, but give no hint of lyric ecstasy. *Nec amo*, he says, *nec æstuo, sed diligo uxorem.* The words define with exquisite accuracy three different kinds of love; but I cannot undertake to give their just equivalents in English. He loved Katie sincerely, nobly, but not

> "With adorations, with fertile tears,
> With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire."

It is pathetic—though not with stage pathos—to note that in these letters he is under the necessity of begging this and that guest to send some contribution, in shape of game or other food, to help him to furnish forth the modest marriage table.

The healthy composure of his mind at the time, and his admirable and wonderful power of detachment, are illustrated by the fact that when his marriage had just been solemnised and the marriage feast was full in view, he did not forget the duties of his primacy of Protestant Christendom. On the seventeenth of June he wrote

one of his pastoral letters to the Christians of Liefland. There, as elsewhere, the spirit of division had shown itself, and he writes in homely and affectionate earnestness, warning the people both against yielding to the divisive zealots, and against being cast down and offended by their appearance in the wake of the Gospel. Slavish submission and insolent licence are alike, he tells them, easy; but if they maintain *both* their freedom towards God and their love towards men—if they are firm in essentials and pliant in circumstantials—if they take care that their liberty shall not be imposed as a law upon others—then they will find that the problem is difficult, requiring vigilant attention and constant prayer. And so, working up the finest practical counsels of Paul's Epistles with homely advices of his own, he strengthens the hands and comforts the hearts of the worthy evangelicals of Liefland.

That the festivity of the twenty-seventh came off, and that it was pretty much like other celebrations of the kind—something between a business and a pleasure—may be taken for granted, but no particular information exists on the subject. Doubtless it "certified, sealed," and published, to Luther's satisfaction, the fact of his marriage. The University of Wittenberg sent by way of wedding present, a handsome goblet, silver gilt. It would be interesting to have the remarks of old John and Margaret on their daughter-in-law. She was the sort of person they would like—quiet, wide-awake, managing, affectionate, with the kind of piety which Dinah Morris exemplified as Adam Bede's wife, rather

than that which made her a preacher on Hayslope Green. We hear of no jar or flaw in the amicable tenor of the relations subsisting between Katie and the pair in Mansfeld valley whom her husband so deeply reverenced; and one circumstance, eloquent in its testimony to the daughterly tenderness of Katie, may be mentioned, namely, that when John Luther was sickening towards his last illness, she, then a busy mother, implored "with tears in her eyes" that he might come to Wittenberg to be nursed by her. Meanwhile old John would return to his furnace with a feeling that any mischief Martin had incurred by immuring himself in a convent was as good as repaired.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ETHICS OF MARRIAGE.

"Now," said Luther, some six or eight weeks after these things, "not in word only, but in deed, have I testified to the Gospel. I have taken to wife a nun in despite of the enemy, who triumph and shout Ha! ha!"

He was never slow to recognise, or specially modest in proclaiming, what God had done by him. He has left on record words of grateful and joyful pride with reference to his appearance at Worms. But I am not aware that he has applied to any incident in his career words of more high and exulting satisfaction than those he has used with reference to his marriage. And although it cannot be alleged that he invariably touched upon the relations between men and women, with the gracious delicacy which the subject requires, it may, I hold, be justly affirmed that his marriage was an integral and essential part, and in some respects a crowning part, of his work as a reformer. In glancing at his views on the question reference must be made to letters, treatises, and conversations, too numerous to quote. It was a theme on which he delighted to dwell. In no instance did he hold up his example to others as more strictly in

accordance with the spirit of Christ than in that of his marrying Catherine von Bora.

Doubtless it is startling that a man and a woman both of whom had solemnly vowed that they would never marry should rend their vows from off their necks and join in wedlock. But no human being can rationally bind himself never to change in his conceptions of duty. A well-regulated life is based to a great extent on resolutions, practically equivalent to vows; but if the life is vitally progressive times will come when old resolutions must be exchanged for better and broader. "A man ought to be king over his habitudes." Adherence to resolution is a true test of manhood; but there are epochs in the soul's life when old resolutions ought to be torn up, and new departures taken. In proportion to the strength and sacredness of the original resolution will be the solemnity of the moment, the earnestness and elevation of the new departure, when the old resolution is put away. It was in obedience to their sense of duty that Martin Luther and (presumably) Catherine von Bora took on them vows of monastic chastity; they had kept those vows irreproachably while their consciences approved of them; and they were now, for this very reason, the fit and proper persons to blazon the claims of a higher morality by casting those vows behind them.

Luther by his marriage protested against the appalling wrong that Hildebrand had done to the Church by the institution of clerical celibacy. And it is certain that, whatever may be obsolete in the

contendings of Luther and the opponents of Luther, the question of a celibate or a married clergy is as fresh to-day as it was in the sixteenth century. Its settlement is essential to the restoration of Christian unity in the West. The moral element is vital to civilisation; and Christianity, diffused by a clergy of refinement, education, and gentle manners, is the best influence that can act upon society. But a celibate priesthood is not compatible with high social civilisation. Once for all, men should not, cannot, and will not trust celibate priests to be on confidential terms with their families. Lord Macaulay asserts, and states that Dr. Johnson also asserted, that the non-juring priests who found refuge in the households of Jacobite squires after the Revolution of 1688 abused the kindness and confidence of their hosts. That was a test case, and it goes far to demonstrate that the temptation to which celibate clergymen are exposed is too much for human nature. In Italy and France clerical celibacy has done more to ruin the Church than Voltaire. With a bitter laugh men give up hope of possessing moral homes, and indemnify themselves by atheism and libertinism. Marriage is the keystone of the natural system of morals, nor is it easy to exaggerate the extent and malignity of the evils that ensue from tampering with the cardinal facts and arrangements on which society depends.

This was one of those things which Luther eminently understood. Nature was, for him, God's ordinance. To search nature, and having discovered

nature's laws, to give them due scope and obedience, was, in his apprehension, a co-ordinate duty with that of searching Holy Writ and obeying its precepts. He had unqualified respect for the honest reading of both. He was impatiently distrustful of commentaries, invincibly sceptical of improvements, upon either. His quarrel with Aristotle was by no means that he impelled men to the study of nature, but that his system had lent itself to the schoolmen, to be spun into metaphysical tissue for sophistication of the clear words of Scripture, and for obstruction of scientific research. In the sphere of religion he put the natural first and the spiritual second. The moral law became freedom and life in the Gospel, but was not vaporised in the process. Health was not necessarily holiness; but the laws of health were Divine, and could not be superseded with advantage to holiness. The innocence of nature is one of the fundamental principles in Luther's scheme of things. And he explicitly condemned, as a sin for which God would call a man to account, the presumption of attempting to live a spiritual life, and to abjure the natural bounties of Providence, unless one were lifted above the common level by special grace. Under ordinary circumstances it was, in Luther's view, a sin for a man to be a bachelor. The point comes up in a letter which, in the very month of his marriage, he wrote to Albert, Cardinal-Archbishop of Mayence.* He exhorts Albert, not only in order that his example may have a good

* De Wette, 710.

effect on ecclesiastics in Germany and elsewhere, but as a matter of personal duty, to take a wife. "Your Princely Grace must acknowledge that you are a male person made by God. Now, it is God's work and will that a man should have a wife. 'It is not good,' says God, 'that the man should be alone; I will make him a help-meet.' Unless, then, God works a miracle, and turns a man into an angel, I cannot see how, without incurring God's anger and displeasure, he can remain alone and wifeless."

It has been admitted that Luther does not always, in treating of marriage, use terms acceptable to the delicate sense of moderns. But perhaps it is as well that, in a department where infinite ill is done by false delicacy, he was not careful to spare the sensibilities of dainty souls. He called a spade a spade. He believed in facts. He recognised man's want of woman and woman's want of man; and if he occasionally laid a rough hand on the sentimentalities, he made rich amends by bringing into light and encircling with the rainbows of Divine promise and Divine approbation the greatest of all natural joys. In exalting marriage he removed that calumnious shadow by which mediæval ecclesiasticism had eclipsed the radiant beneficence of nature's and God's great ordinance of sex—an ordinance by which, throughout all the kingdoms of life, joy is at once doubled and ennobled. You cannot go out into a May pasture and see the butterflies reeling and flickering in the sunlight like flakes of incarnate joy—you cannot go into the spring woods and listen to the notes of the

mated birds, musical from gladness—you cannot look into human literature, and hearken to the most joyful outpourings of the lyre—without being taught, unless you shut your eyes and stop your ears, how vast is the felicity thus produced. Overlook this—misrepresent this—and you obscure the most pointed and pertinent proof nature tenders of a dominant impulse of benevolence in the scheme of things The richest draught of natural delight that the Universal Father has provided for His children, throughout all the tribes of life, from men to linnets, is put out of sight. When this is done, can we wonder if the grand virtue of gratitude, that virtue which played a central part in the typical temptation of Eden, that virtue without which even obedience could make no appeal to the heart, becomes veiled, and men begin to question whether it is due to a God whose beneficence lacks proof?

If we assent to this—and it is scientifically and Scripturally true to the last syllable—shall we not agree with Luther that it was temptation, diabolically impersonated or not, which persuaded Hildebrand that the pestilential evil of clerical celibacy was hyper-terrestrial good? And shall we hesitate to give him our deliberate and whole-hearted applause when we see him, amid the blind fury of some and the frivolous gibes or pusillanimous scruples of others, adopting the most impressive means at his command, namely, by marrying a nun, to announce his condemnation of Hildebrand's act?

Luther's marriage conquered for himself and for the

Protestant Church and world the health, the joy, the holiness of home. It was grandly appropriate that he, who had restored to the Christian layman that priesthood and that kingship which the Papacy had monopolised for the clergy, should restore to the Christian minister the wife of whom a Pope had bereft him. In the face of Katie, beaming from pallid nunhood into ruddy wifehood and motherhood, we read a truth and a Christianity that may still be fresh and fruitful when the forms and phrases of dogmatic Lutheranism have become venerable monuments assisting men to date a stage in the evolution of Christian civilisation.

## CHAPTER III.

### BETTER DAYS FOR LUTHER.

It is pleasanter to contemplate Luther's life after his marriage than his life before it, and especially his life immediately before it. Frederick, indeed, was dead, but the sceptre had passed to a living prince who was more intelligently in accord with Luther than his predecessor had ever been, and more intrepidly resolved to uphold the cause of reformation. John, the brother of Frederick, who immediately succeeded him, had the discernment to perceive that the fact of facts, in relation to Saxon and to German history in his time, was the presence of Luther; and that his own main work as a sovereign prince consisted in carrying into effect that great change which Luther had initiated. This implied a very considerable brightening and bettering in the general position of the latter.

The improvement in his personal comfort was still more marked. Hitherto almost his sole guerdon amid strife and toil had been the "delight of battle"—a delight real enough, and not ignoble when the war is heroic, but mingled nevertheless with tragical drawbacks. His life in the convent had gradually gone from bad to worse, as the inmates departed and the revenues declined.

For a considerable time his friend the ex-prior continued with him in the building; but at last he too went, and Luther had been left alone. Agitated by the excitements of the time, he had been entirely forgetful of himself, and when the eyes and pen could labour no longer he flung himself on a bed that, month after month, was left unmade. In short, his circumstances had been desolate and squalid. He now began to experience the magical effects of woman's influence. Katie had been a nun as he had been a monk, and could doubtless exist on a *minimum* of food, and bear up under great personal hardship. But proof exists that she was not indifferent to creature comforts. We hear much of her thriftiness and management. Luther, who looked on his marriage primarily as the performance of a solemn duty to God and man—an act of religion—had mainly trusted for a marriage provision to Him who feeds the ravens. But the wants of the pair were supplied, and Katie knew how to make the most of little. Luther, moreover, now ate his bread under conditions that would have lent sweetness to a crust. His eye rested on a bright woman's face, which looked on him in the calm fervour of affection; and at intervals the red lips opened, and some simply intelligent question—Herr Doctor, is it this? or, Herr Doctor, is it that?—made the air thrill as with music. Luther felt amazed, enchanted. He tells us in the Table Talk of his wonder and his delight. Here was one that was not precisely himself and yet not quite another. The angularities of his rugged nature seemed to melt away in the solvent

sunshine of this brilliant personality. *Selbander* he called her, using the old German word which indicates matrimonial unity with so much finer felicity than our "other self." A melodious mystery—light and order incarnated in woman's form—turned squalor into comfort, confusion into order, chaos into Eden. Katie soon made a little space around him pleasant for the social communing of those friends whom he liked to meet, and who delighted in his society. No longer could the most virulent of his enemies pretend that he was a haunter of taverns. He had a home. A true church, too, in the house was founded under Katie's influence. Luther was born to be the life of a conversational gathering—so vivacious was he, so sensitive to every influence, so richly gifted with mother-wit, observation, sagacity, and with such stores of homely illustration and idiomatic German speech. He was in his element as apostolic bishop of this fireside church; a bishop who did not choose a text and formally preach upon it, but who talked upon any topic of the day, upon any question in philosophy, morals, or theology, and who always talked with pithy sense and vivid interest. It has sometimes been suggested that the volumes of his Table Talk are of more fresh, practical, perennial worth than all the tomes of his controversial literature; and the Table Talk is neither more nor less than an abstract of the discourses with which, in discharging the episcopal duty of hospitality, Luther enlivened and instructed his guests. It was Katie whose propitious influence formed the household circle in which such

discoursing was possible. To her the world owes the Table Talk.

Not that Luther and his wife were as dainty-sweet at all times towards one another as lovers in a picture. A well-ordered Christian home is the best place on earth, but it is not heaven. In his letters—he was as open, be it remembered, and communicative as a boy of nine—there are a few scattered hints that those pungencies which may be pronounced inseparable from married life did exist. He said—perhaps it was an *obiter dictum*—that if it were known beforehand what is in marriage no one would marry. The happiest of married men might, at moments, say so—in his haste! There is an irreducible *minimum* of feminine idiosyncrasy which no man can understand. And Luther may himself have been in fault. There were hours in which he would have answered to the description which Carlyle's attached and admiring mother gave of her son, as one difficult to live with. Melanchthon, deeply as he revered, and truly as he loved Luther, was not ignorant of this fact.

Anyhow, the trace of pungency which made itself felt in the relations between Luther and his wife was no more than enough to supply that "bitter" which prevents "the sweet" from cloying. If a word or two of disparaging reference to his marriage may, with great difficulty, be gleaned from his letters, it is the case, as Zimmermann says, that in countless places he expresses himself on the subject with exuberant satisfaction. He says that he has in his wife a treasure that he would

not give for all the wealth of the Kaiser. He deliberately pronounces it "God's highest grace and gift" to have a pious, friendly, God-fearing wife, with household qualities. He scruples not to compliment himself by congratulating Katie on her good fortune in possessing him. "You have a pious man who loves you; you are an empress." Of course, not only as a sensible man, but as one who had fully realised that the corruption of the best is in all cases the worst, he recognised that ill-assorted marriages produce the most exquisite wretchedness. "Ah, dear Lord God," he once exclaims, "marriage is not merely a natural thing; it is God's special gift; the sweetest of all sweetnesses, the dearest of all delights, and the chastest of all states, more chaste than any possible form of celibacy or solitude, when it falls out well: when it falls out ill, it is hell." Above nature; yes, as the crown and acme of natural bounties; but most truly and authoritatively natural. To forbid it, to cast a slur on it, to condemn it, is to go right in the face of natural necessity, and natural right—"as if one should proscribe eating, drinking, sleeping." The idea irritates him. "Away with such nonsense! What God has done and ordained it stands not with us or our fancies to improve. Ours is not the artist-hand that will touch up God's disposing, and put His work to shame. Let us attempt it, and experience, as it has done in the past, will reveal our mistake." With sterling chivalry, better than any highflown, pinchbeck imitation of knightliness, he rests the claim of women to tender consideration on the mysterious glory of maternity.

"Although a woman is a weak vessel and instrument, still she possesses that highest honour, motherhood. All men are conceived, born, suckled, nursed by women. Thence come the darling little ones, the highly-prized heirs. This honour—that they are our mothers—ought in fairness to cover and swallow up all feminine weakness." "Oh, how rightly things go on when man and wife sit friendly at table! Though they have their little bickerings now and then, they must not mind that; it is mere chance exception, not the rule of life. Put up with it." *

The man is frankly and bravely to commit the reins of house-government to the woman. Among his businesses, or his books, he may want silence in the house, and dislike to hear her sharp tongue among the servants, but he ought to feel that she is performing an indispensable duty. "Though a woman is a trifle bitter, you should have patience with her. She and her sharpness are part of the household machinery, and the servants at times thoroughly deserve what they get—a good hard talking-to."

The sum of the matter is that if the planet had been searched with a candle, a better wife for Luther could not have been found. Gradually a more cheerful tone became perceptible in his letters. The thought that he was immediately to die passed from his mind, and a spirit of conciliation tempered, for the first time, the violence of his polemical contendings.

* Table Talk.

# Book XIII.

## THE NEW ERA

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## THE NEW ERA.

### CHAPTER I.

RETROSPECT—BIBLE V. POPE—LETTER TO STAUPITZ—ANTICHRIST.

We have accompanied Luther, without rupture of biographical or historical continuity, until the stormy terrors of the Peasants' War are past, and he nestles down in peace and comfort under the domestic auspices of Katie. But it is absolutely necessary for us to return to take up threads which we were compelled to let fall in the impetuous rush of events. While the forces of destruction were at work, other forces, of a constructive character, were in operation, and to judge of these we must recur to the year 1522, when Luther resumed activity at Wittenberg after having left the Wartburg.

The fifth summer since he had posted the Theses was dawning upon Germany. What a change had taken place!—a change unparalleled through long ages—a change affecting not only the externals of human life, but the thoughts in men's brains, the feelings in

their hearts, the conceptions entertained of all things in heaven above and on the earth beneath. The mediæval age had melted away like a dissolving view. Modern life had begun. Customs which but yesterday had been universal and unquestioned were ceasing to be practised, nay, to be remembered or understood. Cardinal Chieregati, proceeding through Germany in the course of this year, lifts his two fingers, as had been his wont, to bless an appreciative, grateful, reverent people. Ah me! instead of bowing their heads, as of old, to receive the benediction of a prince of the Holy Roman See, they stare in wonderment, in tittering surprise and curiosity, as if they did not know what the consecrated personage could mean. They lift *their* two fingers in mimetic pantomime, ironically offering to bless *him!*

The spell which, from time immemorial, had been wielded by the Papacy was broken. The change had been most completely effected in Saxony and the German districts adjoining Bohemia; but it had taken place to an extent which we are much more likely to under-estimate than to exaggerate from the founts of the Danube to the mouths of the Rhine, from the gates of Vienna to the market-places of Holland. Christendom was already rent asunder. Not yet calling themselves Protestant, but in jubilant, all-hoping, defiant protest and insurrection against Papalism, proudly confident in their new exercise of private judgment, painting the skies of the future with the promises of freedom, the men of the advancing party stood aloof from those who still clung to the mediæval order. But

the party of reaction and resistance possessed great power, and met frank antagonism with fierce hostility. The summer of 1522 did not close before the Papists had recourse to fire in dealing with heresy.

Let us apprehend distinctly the position taken up by Luther at this time—what he taught as Gospel, what he assailed as error, usurpation, or injustice. As to the essentials of the truth of God, he had never wavered for an instant from the day of his new birth. Salvation was for him the indwelling of Christ. Apart from Christ he owned no spiritual life, no righteousness. He made, with universal completeness, that surrender of the soul to God which religion in its intensest form has always required. To refuse this was to die spiritually, to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. At the same time there is not, in any sentence which I have seen from Luther's hand up to this time, any hint of limit placed to the number of those who may have Christ dwelling in them. The divine life was freely offered to all. The sin of sins was to doubt the plenitude and bounteousness of Infinite Love. The Gospel was essentially a flooding of the soul with joy, with heaven. The life of grace was a life of glory—beginning the moment the soul had been born anew, and increasing throughout eternity. To resist this infinitely beneficial message was not only the greatest possible sin against God, but the greatest possible cruelty towards man. With those guilty of such wickedness no alliance was permitted. Whether they openly condemned and scorned the Word, or whether they

cunningly repressed and persecuted it, "no favour, no charity, no benignity" had they to expect from Luther. He avowed it to be, "towards them, supreme charity to resist their madness and impiety to all lengths and with all strength." *

On a second point also he had now ceased to have any doubt or to make any compromise. Gradually, through difficult and painful processes of investigation, he had reached certitude that what he had been bred to look upon as an organisation for the diffusion of God's benignity upon earth was in fact a usurping, an apostate, an antichristian thing, nay the actual and transcendent Antichrist. The authority which had, so to say, guaranteed and modelled theology, and which commanded men, in the name of God, to accept its interpretation of the Bible itself, he held to be unworthy of trust.

On the 27th of June, 1522, he wrote a letter to Staupitz.† His dear master, through whose lips the dayspring from on high had visited him, had been appalled at the extremities to which he had proceeded. Staupitz had written in a tone of distress and expostulation, saying that in the foulest dens of iniquity there was exultation over his achievements. He replied by counselling Staupitz, with gentle earnestness, to shut his ears to lies about him and his fellow-workers. "I adjure you, by the bowels of Christ, not to believe our calumniators." But that his war with the Papacy is to the death he plainly avows. "That kingdom of

* De Wette, 359. † De Wette, 411.

abomination is to be destroyed, with all that pertains to it." God will destroy it, not man, by the sole power of the Word.

It was not to be wondered at that scandals should be given, and portents arise, in such an operation. One martyr to the truth, the prior of a convent in Antwerp, was about to be burnt by the Papists, if indeed he had not already suffered. "They are in consultation how they can have me also burnt; but I provoke Satan more every day, doing my best to accelerate the time when Christ will appear to destroy Antichrist." In assailing and seeking to remove "the body" of Antichrist—the system through which the Papacy exercised its influence upon men, celibacy of priests, sacrificial masses, tyrannous vows of monastic renunciation, and so on—he and his coadjutors were "angels sent out to gather the tares in the field of the Church" against the great and mighty day of the Lord.

On the question whether the Papacy is Antichrist much may be said, and few will now adopt Luther's language on the subject; but the question whether the Pope, or the Roman Church, is invested with authority to overrule the judgment of mankind in declaring the sense of Holy Writ is as fresh to-day as it was when Luther wrote this letter to Staupitz. In the *Apologia* Cardinal Newman distinctly states that it was in obedience to this authority that he accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation. He had been a devout reader of Scripture from his childhood. He had studied theology for many years. He had brought all the resources of a

cultivated intellect and a reverent conscience to test the purport and net result of the Bible teaching on the subject. Still he "did not believe the doctrine." He stepped across the threshold of Papacy. Then all was changed. "I had no difficulty in believing it as soon as I believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God, and that she had declared this doctrine to be part of the original revelation."

We must not be led from our path by the speculative questions, curiously interesting and philosophically important as they are, which this intimation suggests. Whether "belief" in a doctrine might not, under these circumstances, be more correctly described as acquiescence in a doctrine, may be doubted. Let us assume, however, that what was impossible for Galileo is possible for Dr. Newman, and that, at the nod and beck of the Roman "oracle," *he* can in very deed believe either that the earth goes round or that it stands still. It is at least open to no dispute that modern science, unanimously and without reservation, denies to every kind of oracle authority to determine the sense of ancient writings, traditions, records, or revelations of any kind.

Luther made Europe vibrate as with earthquake throbs by the power of his proclamation that no Roman oracle possessed authority over the Word of God or the conscience and mind of man. For him, all authority resided in the Bible. He seems to have believed, however, that the Church, in the sense of the general and lasting persuasion of the body of Christians, has been guarded from error. The acquiescence of Christendom in infant

baptism he puts forward as at least one very strong reason for believing that usage to be lawful. But he assigns no organ of expression to this authoritative mind of the Church. He distinctly alleges that General Councils, as well as Popes and conclaves, have demonstrated their fallibility by sanctioning error; his assertion that infant baptism had always been acquiesced in is open to challenge; and so widely, and for periods so protracted, did doctrines and practices which he held to be against the letter and the spirit of the Gospel prevail throughout Christendom, that his reference to the general sense and sentiment of "the Church" as, on the whole, trustworthy, does not seem to be of much practical value or availability.

Did he hold, then, that there was no king, no authoritative judge or tribunal, in the Christian Israel, but that every man might do what was right in his own eyes, interpreting for himself the written Word? Whether he would have accepted this result *simpliciter*, or would not, may be a question; but that practically is his opinion. He held explicitly that the king of the Church is Christ; that Christ's government, though real, is invisible; that this government has not been transferred to any man or to any organisation; that it is competent to Christians, acting in accordance with the principles of Christ, and taking into consideration local peculiarities, to make arrangements through which this government shall be carried on. Christ left an infallible law; but He did not leave an infallible man or tribunal to interpret and apply it.

Lord Macaulay puts into lucid words what I believe to have been the substantial meaning of Luther on this subject. "The Protestant doctrine touching the right of private judgment, that doctrine which is the common foundation of the Anglican, the Lutheran, and the Calvinistic Churches, that doctrine by which every sect of Dissenters vindicates its separation, we conceive not to be this, that opposite opinions may both be true; nor this, that truth and falsehood are both equally good; nor yet this, that all speculative error is necessarily innocent; but this, that there is on the face of the earth no visible body to whose decrees men are bound to submit their private judgment on points of faith."

If, however, Luther denied the existence of an infallible human depositary of truth, or tribunal of authority, he vehemently affirmed the existence of an infallible law. Private judgment was limited by the Word; freedom exalting its horn against the Bible was impious presumption. He asked no man to praise him for doing what he had no mind to do. He did not set up for liberator of the universal reason. The freedom he claimed was freedom to read the Bible, and to obey its commands.

Many a modern, vauntfully firm in his conviction that an infallible Book is as much an imaginary and superstitious conception as an infallible Church, will on this exclaim that Protestant freedom of judgment and Popish submission to the infallible Church come to much the same thing. But the slightest reflection will make it plain that this is not so. Even on that

view of the case which is most favourable to the objector—even if we adopt the theory of Bible infallibility in its utmost rigour, and say that we will believe the Bible against mathematics, which Luther, in fact, did—we shall find the practical difference to be great. A Bible conned by a population, studied and discussed, becomes an immense incentive to mental exertion—cannot fail, in fact, to provide a highly important education. The Bible is not a mere collection of theological propositions. Apart from all theories respecting it, no competent judge, no man of sense, has ever denied that it is a literature in itself—legal, poetical, historical, philosophical, as well as religious; a literature of great variety, vitality, pith, and power. The man who, having thoroughly surveyed it, having gone down into its mines and scaled its mountains, having thrilled to the pathos and the lyric melody of its Psalms, and passed from the shrewdness of Solomon to the elevation of Isaiah, and so on to Jesus on the Mount, and Paul at Athens, and John in Patmos, yet pronounces himself too sublimated in moral and mental condition to profit by it, or to follow its counsels, must either be a stupendous genius or a prince of coxcombs. To have a thorough knowledge of any book reasonably pretending to greatness is to be, in some true sense, an educated person. In the hurry and stress of political and professional avocations, in the absorption of art, of science, of skilled handicrafts, in the exhausting toil of agricultural and other forms of labour, a vast proportion of mankind can find time and energy for but a limited amount of high

thinking and high reading. The Bible, take it for all in all, affords the best material for the spiritual culture of mankind, for exercising the faculties of reverence and adoration, for ennobling the affections, and giving to life a soul of the heroic and the ideal, that civilisation has any hint of—the best without a rival, the first without a second. Very serious difficulty has, no doubt, been experienced by some in dealing with the cruelties and other crimes which were associated with religion as portrayed in the Old Testament. But modern science has conclusively and lucidly disposed of all such difficulties by its doctrine of evolution. We now see that if the divine-human religion was a living growth, it must needs have proceeded from a lower to a higher perfection, in proportion as the conception of Deity was spiritualised and exalted. This once perceived, it becomes incontestable, and will, in fact, be disputed by no reasonable man, that the Bible, whatever else it may be, stands absolutely unrivalled as a manual of spiritual culture, of adult education, of universal mental discipline. All this we might learn from shrewd reflection beforehand; all this we find to be verified by experience, when history is interrogated on the subject. Bible-reading peasants have been the stoutest of patriots, Bible-reading artisans the most intelligently industrious of citizens, Bible-reading nations the van of mankind.

In proclaiming the authority of Rome to be usurpation Luther referred Christendom to this Book. It was the noblest service which, at that juncture, any man

could render to human progress and the civilisation of the world.

He decided that the one thing needful for Europe was "more light," that the one satisfactory and inexpugnable defence of himself and his Reformation was a complete and open Bible. He came from the Wartburg bearing the first rough draft of the New Testament in German. No sooner did he quell the tumult that had arisen in his absence than he addressed himself to the prosecution of his enterprise, showing his greatness to be massive and of the sterling ore by courting no attribution to himself of a position of isolation or pre-eminence among the translators, but organising a body, or, as we should now say, a committee, of the best Wittenberg scholars and divines, Melanchthon, of course, conspicuous among them, to co-operate with him in the work.

Oppressed as he was with other and more agitating employments, he collected his faculties into the finest exercise of critical skill, linguistic felicity, and home-bred sense and tenderness, in the translation of the Bible. Vividly eager to secure accuracy even in matters which theological zealots might deem of slight importance, he wrote to Spalatin to make searching investigation among the court jewels with a view to instructing the translators as to the colours and the names of particular gems mentioned in the Bible. His main principle in the choice of words and phrases was to avoid Latinisms, Grecisms, Hebraisms as much as possible, and to express the exact sense in idiomatic,

expressive, quietly melodious, and home-bred German. His principles were, on the whole, admirably exemplified, a century later, in our Authorised Version. During this summer of 1522 he pushed steadily on with his great work, and began to send portions of it to the press, instead of waiting until the whole was ready.

But we have, after all, to remember that our hero lived in the sixteenth century, and that he did not and could not leap suddenly into the intellectual atmosphere of the nineteenth. We must assure ourselves that it is the living, concrete man we know, by realising some of his limitations and blind sides. So deficient was he in respect of scientific appreciation of natural but unusual occurrences that he believed them to be portents of Divine wrath. A whale, "seventy feet long, thirty-five feet round," had been stranded on the Dutch coast. "This monster," he wrote, "they know from ancient instances to be a certain sign of God's anger." He believed that Rome, the site of the Papacy, would perish by express act of God's wrath in terrific catastrophe; and since Germany had been an accomplice in the crimes, it might fear to be partaker of the plagues, of Rome. The Rhine stream was red with blood, and Huss, Jerome, and other martyrs called to God to avenge them on Deutschland. Such were the sombre and lurid imaginings that at this time varied the scenery of Luther's mind.

That he was wrong as to the imminency of the Judgment Day and the end of the world has been

demonstrated by mere lapse of time; and there are not many in our day, even among those holding with him that the Church of Christ was metamorphosed and travestied in the Papacy, who will accept his inferences from this condition. We may believe that, of the "many Antichrists" already at work in the apostolic age, and which still continue at work in all Christian communities, the Antichrist which gradually culminated in sacerdotalism, in clerical celibacy, in auricular confession, in vows of tyrannical monasticism, in the ecclesiastical lordship which made of one member of the Christian brotherhood a Prince-Pope, and in the ceremonial which turned other members of the Christian brotherhood into a caste of mystically endowed priests and bishops—to wit, the Roman Antichrist—was one, and a potent and pre-eminent one. But that the antichristianism of Rome had been aught else or worse than a subtle, unconscious, marvellous blending of good and evil—that the Roman Church had not conferred immense benefits on Europe in its time—that it does not admit of reform—that it ought not to be waited on and pleaded with in the spirit of tenderest Christian charity, but recoiled from as past conversion—that the destruction awaiting it in the final triumph of Christ upon earth can be anything worse than to have its imperfections removed in the fulness of spiritual light, and its sins pardoned in the plenitude of Divine love, and its heart broken in passionate repentance—these are propositions to each and all of which every Protestant who cherishes the hope of seeing his protest

taken up, and the unity of the Christian family restored, will return a sharp denial.

Luther's assumption of an attitude of irreconcilability towards Rome—his definite and inflexible conviction that the Pope was unpardonably and unsalvably Antichrist—is one of the cardinal facts in modern history. To it is due the strange and lamentable circumstance that abhorrence of Papists has been a religion to Protestants, and abhorrence of Protestants a religion to Papists. The true unity of Christendom—a unity of spirit and affection independent of all forms and organisations—cannot be regained until this part of Protestant religion and of Roman religion has been cancelled on both sides. It cannot be so until Papists and Protestants reciprocally acknowledge that the case which can be presented on each side is, at a first glance, so strong that candid men, who are no fools, *may be convinced by either*. It is marvellous that Luther, who, until he attained mature manhood, until many years after he accepted and preached the Gospel of grace, until, in fact, he read Laurentius Valla, and searchingly scrutinised the historical and Scriptural defences of the Papacy, had found no difficulty in living as a Papist, should not only have assured himself that the Pope was Antichrist, but should, after a brief period of transition, have lost the power of sympathetically making allowance for any who held stiffly to his own former belief.

"Who held stiffly." This is a qualification that must be carefully remembered. For those who obstinately

persisted in allegiance to the Pope he had no sufferance; but for all who were in heart on the side of the Gospel, though still cumbered with the habitudes and ceremonialisms of Popery, he had tender consideration. If anyone said that the mass was a sacrifice, or that the saying or singing of masses was a meritorious work, the purchase-money of salvation, he anathematised the heresy. But whether the bread and the wine were both partaken of; whether the communicant took the bread into his own hand or received it into his mouth from the hand of the minister; whether confession were made or were not made; whether images were left in the churches or were excluded; these were in his view "mere nothings, *res nihili*," about which it was unchristian to vex weak consciences. He provisionally restored, in the parish church of Wittenberg, those usages which Carlstadt had abolished.

## CHAPTER II.

### SETTLING PASTORS AND REBUKING A KING.

Although Luther had in him a great fund of pugnacity, and though it is as a man eminent in the strife of words that he chiefly figures in history, we are constantly reminded, as we trace in his letters the course of his personal and spiritual life, that his choicest delight was in the work of construction, and that he preferred to counsel and to lead rather than to engage in the controversial fray.

From the time when he quelled the tumult of the Zwickauers until his death, he never ceased to labour, with a sedulity and an intensity that would have been oppressive but for the congeniality of his tasks, in the pastoral duties of his office. The enterprise of Bible translation was never suspended. Nor did he ever tire in pushing forward that essential operation in the reform of the Church, the providing of congregations with suitable pastors, and the finding for capable and evangelically inspired men sympathetic and appreciative congregations.

An illustration—one of a thousand—of the mode in which these transactions were conducted is afforded by the settlement of Gabriel Zwilling as pastor at Alten-

burg. Zwilling had a notable gift of eloquence, but his head was none of the strongest, and it had been considerably turned by impact of the Zwickau fanaticism. During the last period of Luther's stay at the Wartburg he had been an admired pulpit orator in Wittenberg in sympathy with the image-breakers and the quack prophets. But when Luther appeared, and Zwilling heard him, in that chaos-quelling week, take the measure of the vaunted inspiration of Storch and Company, he awoke as from a feverish dream, and returned to his allegiance to modesty, common sense, and Luther. Zwilling therefore marched no longer with Storch, Carlstadt, and the opposition party, but loyally submitted himself to the true leader in the cause of reform. And since absolute incapacity to retain a grudge against any sinner who repented characterised our Martin, he took Zwilling into cordial friendship.

While matters were on this footing, the municipality of Altenburg—the burgomaster and council of the town—sent a letter to Luther asking him to help them in procuring a minister. He replied in brief and dignified terms, commending their Christian desire for the Divine Word, and naming Zwilling as the man they ought to hear. He takes it as a matter of course that the joining of the pastoral tie must depend upon their finding that Zwilling's preaching is to the edifying and spiritual delectation of their souls. But he advises them not to be startled by his having left his convent and abandoned his monk's dress, which Luther thinks were wise proceedings.

Then he writes to Zwilling. The Altenburg people have asked him, Luther, to supply an evangelical preacher. "If they come to you," he proceeds, "go with them; and if they accept you, regard their voice as a most certain call from God. For I also have offered and commended you to them. Wherefore I beg that you will take this my counsel and deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who calls thee by me and Philip. Go in peace, and the Lord make thee grow into many thousands." It is partly in the style of an apostolic bishop, partly in the style of an affectionate father. He adds a word or two of frank admonition and caution, glancing, one clearly perceives, at Zwilling's high-flying oratories and fantastic masqueradings when under the influence of the prophets. He is above all things to study modesty, and to go about in simple and reputable attire, not in queer hats or costumes, giving offence to the weaker sort. He is to be mindful of the sensibilities of feeble piety, and to beware of lapsing into any spasmodic work of the image-breaking kind. The Word, the Word alone, is to be his weapon. The Father wills that men should be drawn to Him through Christ, not forced. Contempt of impiety is first of all to be instilled into their hearts; then, without stroke of hand, impiety will fall away. Love of piety is first to be introduced; then piety will come of its own accord.* And again, when Zwilling had been writing something in which Luther detected a false note: "Your letter did not please me.

* De Wette, 387.

I perceived in it something—I know not what—of spiritual presumption. Don't glory in your willingness to do and suffer much for the Word. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. Walk in fear and in contempt of yourself, and pray the Lord that He may do all, yourself nothing. Be thou, silent and unworking, a Sabbath in which Christ may do wonderful works."* Is not this Martin a bit of sterling stuff—a man that one can love? Often do his rugged force and angry vehemence repel us; but are we not conscious of relenting impulses when we see him, a moral Hercules, at the very time when wrestling with the crested crowd of anarchy, turn round and, with the wisdom of a saint and the tenderness of a father, deal with a noble nature somewhat too delicately organised?

But if he refused to exercise compulsion, or to sanction disorderly haste, in discarding what he held to be the husk and shell of Romanism, destined in due time to disappear, he was still more keen in his remonstrance when he found compulsion brought to bear upon men whose consciences enjoined them to abandon the Papal system. Frederick, halting as usual between two, was inclined to deal severely with those pastors who had invincible objections to reading the mass. Luther pleaded eagerly for such, urging that all facilities should be afforded for transferring them to benefices in which the reading of mass would not be wanted, and that in the meantime they should not be deprived of their livings.

* De Wette, 395 (slightly paraphrased).

Sincere as was his respect for persons in authority, he was not disposed to veil the Gospel in the presence of kings. Of this fact the new Tudor sovereign of England, Henry the Eighth, had occasion to become aware. It is the habit of wise mankind to credit princes with all kinds of fine qualities in their youth, and to debit them sternly in their old age with the difference between promise and performance. The gloss had not yet worn off bluff Harry, whose innate arrogance and conceit, inflated by the incense of flattery from a thousand censers, were mistaken by the simple for guarantees of solid ability; whose dalliance with study masked his fathomless sensuality, and whose frank manners and love of social distinction were not known to hide a bad heart. The itch of universal shining took in Henry the place of an honest and manly thirst for fame. In his boyhood he had been designed for the Archbishopric of Canterbury, and had probably read in theology a good deal more than is customary for princes. He had urged Charles, at the time of the Diet of Worms, to deal roundly with the pestilent heretic of Wittenberg, and when the edict of the Diet had been issued and Luther had betaken himself to the Wartburg, he deigned to step into the controversial arena and engage the presumptuous monk. It was the treatise on the *Babylonish Captivity* that had specially offended Henry's theological prepossessions, and he undertook to establish once more, on their scholastic foundations, the sacraments of the Church. Accordingly the world was illuminated with *A Defence of the*

*Seven Sacraments, against Martin Luther, by the most invincible King of England and France, Henry the Eighth of that name.* Pope Leo had lived to see this good day. With largesse of glowing applause the fine-gentleman Pontiff welcomed the sceptred champion of sacerdotalism. It was debated whether Henry should receive the honorary title of the Apostolic, the Orthodox, the Faithful, the Angelic, or simply the Defender of the Faith. A bull was composed in his honour, and his production was declared in eloquent Latin to be dipped in the dew of celestial grace. Leo had the joy of signifying this in October, 1521. It was indeed consoling to know that the Papacy had still a royal friend in the land of Cœur de Lion, and to be assured that if all the world forsook the See of Rome, the Pope might count on a sure asylum in the island of Britain. Papal infallibility, it would seem, does not include the gift of prophecy.

Luther published his reply in July, 1522. It is in his worst style—coarse and acrimonious; to read it now is like trying to penetrate a thicket of matted thorns. It called forth much remonstrance from his friends at the time. But he heeded them not. During those years one of the dominant and fixed ideas of Luther—furnishing the *motif* to not a little in his books—was that in dealing with Papists he had been too meek and yielding in speech and demeanour. He ought, in particular, he believed, to have been more passionately defiant at Worms. He reminds an expostulating friend, on the present occasion, that he had written many a book in

gentle tones, without a trace of sharpness. But the milder he had been the more had the enemy raged; and now he would strike a different note, taking as his example Christ, who had called the Jews a generation of vipers; Peter, who had told Simon Magus to take himself and his money to the devil; and Paul, who had characterised the foes of the truth as dogs, liars, messengers and children of Satan.

The episode of Luther's controversial duel with Henry is of some historical importance, not much. Had Luther been civil and deferential, Henry would have had one incentive the fewer to make him theologically a detester of the Reformers; but it is unlikely that in any case he could have appreciated the spiritual and moral elements in the new doctrine; and the impelling forces which hurried him to a breach with Rome, and made him declare himself Pope-king in England, were not of a kind to be much influenced by considerations of gratitude for golden roses or for titular epithets. At the first wind of troubles between Henry and the Pope, Luther, who in the intervening years had attained to a more tranquil and pacific frame of mind, hastened to apologise for his book, and to express the earnest hope that Henry was opening his heart to the Gospel. But magnanimity and the power to forgive were not among Henry's qualities. He repelled the reformer's advances with a contemptuous snarl. The part which Luther took in the Reformation of England, a part comprehensive and profound, was that of working in the hearts and minds of the people, not that of

counselling kings. The Lollard fires had not burnt evangelical heresy out of England; and Wickliffe and his preachers had been, on all essential points, pioneers of Luther. There were thousands, therefore, in England prepared to read his books with eager avidity, and they did so with results of which neither Henry nor the Pope had a surmise.

## CHAPTER III.

### POPE BY DIVINE RIGHT.

How true is it that life is a ravelled skein—a ravelled skein and with many threads of different colours. It seems impossible for us to attain to anything like continuity in this delineation of the life of Luther, so close do surprises of difficulty and sorrow lie to bright gleams of gladness or cheering spaces of serene repose.

We may deem it, on the whole, a solemnly joyous enterprise to rear the form and fabric of the new Church, divesting it of spot or blemish, and watching the dawn, over cheek and forehead, emergent from troublous foam, of pristine and immortal beauty. And yet there were twinges of sharp anguish for Luther, when his conscience, on the one hand, pricked him for temporising with what he now firmly believed to be perilous idolatry, and his heart, on the other, drew him towards old friends, and most of all towards an old and beloved prince, who might be pained by change. The church of All Saints, at Wittenberg, with its world-famous treasury of relics, had become to Luther pretty much what a grove of Baal, planted on an airy knoll a bow-shot from his bedroom window, would have been to Elijah. But no enginery of theological argument

seemed strong enough to quite do away with the witchery by which old Frederick had been knit in affection and reverence to the shrine of his fathers. As month by month and year by year went on, and the new era more and more powerfully announced and pronounced itself, the church of All Saints became more marked in its singularity, standing out in reformed Wittenberg like a mediæval ruin in a modern garden. So late as the very verge of 1524 we find Luther chafing at the tolerance which has been extended to All Saints. He can understand how evangelical friends, looking at the city of the Reformation from afar, should be offended at the persistent vitality of "that sacrilegious Tophet" on which the Saxon princes had worse than wasted money. But by the mercy of God, the Wittenberg Gospellers possess, he says, such opulence of truth that they can ring All Saints round with the Divine antidote, and thus isolate the pest. He will not have it attacked save with the sword of the Spirit. Did he not rein in the people daily, "that house of All Saints, say rather of All Devils," would soon wear a different aspect. And yet, at a time which must still have been fresh in the memory of Luther, Staupitz, with hardly a brow-darkening of disapproval from his fiery friend, had gone relic-hunting, at the instance of Frederick, with a view to enrichment of his ancestral shrine. One could wish that Luther's conscience had permitted him to deal more tenderly with the scruples of a prince who strove with simple honesty to do his duty. But when Luther felt that the categorical imperative of conscience

was laid upon him he could be stayed by no considerations whatever. The resistance of Frederick to a fundamental change in relation to All Saints became feebler and feebler, and some little time before his death, with his listless connivance rather than positive consent, the ancient relic-shrine was dismantled. The idea that within the circuit of Wittenberg there should be an institution, calling itself a church, that lent sanction to the notion that saints or relics may share with Christ the office of mediation between God and man had become unendurably painful to Luther.

It is, however, in a far pleasanter, and equally characteristic, light that he appears when counselling simple and pious people as to how so ticklish and complex a transaction as the breaking up of a monastery is to be conducted. The people of Leisnig had so prosperously managed what had fallen to them locally of this kind of business, that Luther printed an account which they sent him of what they had done, to serve as a pattern in similar cases, and introduced it to the public with a letter of Christian advice and admonition which, if we read it with the open eye and heart of sympathetic intelligence, will not only bring us very near to Martin Luther, but will help us to feel at home in Germany in those days when the old mediæval order was visibly giving place to the new.*

The dangers he mainly guards against are, first, those arising from temptations to violence, and secondly, those arising from the cunning avarice that seeks to

* De Wette, 519.

appropriate to its own uses what had previously been devoted to the service of God. No violence or compulsion is to be called into play. If the inmates of the convent, or other ecclesiastical foundation, wish to quit, they are to be permitted to go. Should the bulk of the inmates go, but some, whether from old age, or from lack of means to obtain a livelihood, or from a conscientious objection to accept of freedom, choose to remain, "they are not to be thrust out, or treated with any unfriendliness, but are to be provided for, so long as they live, on the same scale which they had formerly enjoyed. For the Gospel teaches us to do good to the unworthy, as the heavenly Father lets the rain fall and the sun shine on good and bad; and we have to take into consideration that these persons came into their present situation through the influence of a common blindness and error, and were not taught any handicraft by which they might keep themselves." Nay, being perhaps reminded by his practical instinct that the broken-winged lingerers in convents would run considerable risk of being neglected, he goes on to say that they ought to be more bounteously and gently cared for than formerly, "so that all may see that it is not avarice, clutching at property dedicated to spiritual uses, but Christian faith, that is hostile to convents."

The officials of the foundation are to be dealt with on the same generous terms. He does not forget that some, on leaving the cloister, might, with small assistance, to be laid out in regaining skill in a half-forgotten craft, or otherwise procuring a start, be able to earn a

livelihood. He particularly insists upon it that if the founder's heirs are poor and needy, "a great part" of the available means shall be allotted to them, or even, if necessary, the whole. "For sure enough the intent of their father was not, and ought not to have been, to take the bread out of the children's mouths, and put it to other uses. And, indeed, if this was the intention, it is false and unchristian, fathers being bound before all things to provide for their children. No higher God's-service than that can they do with their goods." One of Martin's pet notions, this—and of John Luther's before him! To put the second before the first—to cultivate superfine spiritual virtue by shirking or scamping the plain duties of nature—was not to the mind of either of those practical men. If, however, the heirs of the founder were in comfortable circumstances, they should not take again what their ancestor had given.

What, then, was to be done with the surplus? It was to be formed into a fund for the benefit of the poor. The wish of the founders had been to honour and serve God. They did so unwisely in founding convents, but their intention deserves respect. There can be no greater service of God than helping the poor, "as Christ Himself, on the last day, will acknowledge and decide."

One use to which Martin points out that convents can be applied is that of establishing schools for boys and girls. The buildings might be utilised also for municipal purposes. "The episcopal consecration

need not stand in the way, for God knows nothing of it."

He is scrupulously anxious that all shall be done decently and in order, with respect for authority and deference to law; but the tenderness of the Christian poet, and the homely yet delicate kindness of the Christian pastor, are beautifully evinced by his reiterated insistence that something finer than mere worldly justice—something which he calls Christian love—meaning the sagacity, the tact of gentle, affectionate, enlightened fatherhood—is necessary in dealing with the inmates and apportioning the funds of convents. "Christian love," he says, "and not the sharpness of man's jurisprudence, ought to be the deciding power." It is this kind of thing that irresistibly endears Luther to us. This was the work he loved; his furious and coarse contending, on the stage of the world, was bitterness to him, compared with this.

The range of his correspondence was immense. Everyone consults him, from princes who think of introducing the Reformation into their territories to girls who confide to him their wish and hope to be married. His letters to eminent persons, and to the Christian Church or Churches, are the likest things to St. Paul's epistles that, so far as I know, exist. Inferior they indeed are, immeasurably inferior, to the writings of St. Paul, which, next to the discourses of Jesus, are the most Divinely-inspired pieces in the religious literature of mankind; but they read like echoes from them, true though far off. They are very noble in their unaffected

withdrawal of the writer into the background—his entire absorption in his idea, in his cause, in his Lord. In the letter to the Christians at Worms there is not one word of reference to the part he had played in their town some three years before! His thought is only of the joy he has in their acceptance of the good news of salvation, and of the use he may be to them in beaconing them onward in the right way. In this and all his letters he displays an astonishing familiarity with the Bible, an astonishing grasp of its facts and its arguments. After four centuries of Bible reading and Bible preaching, we are inevitably sensible, in perusing these letters, of some trace of conventionality and triteness; but even the modern reader feels that Luther was, in a quite exceptional and transcendent sense, "mighty in the Scriptures." At the time, such letters were unexampled, and their influence was like that of an inspiration fresh from God. The letter to Duke Charles of Savoy, in whose domain there was more than a glimmering of the Gospel light, is a brief and terse but comprehensive summary of the Christian faith as set forth by Luther in contradistinction to the sophistications of the Papacy. Most of it, being nothing more than a lucid and animated statement of Protestant doctrine, would fail to interest this generation; but I shall quote one paragraph because it brings out pointedly the unselfishness of Luther's conception of Christian activity, and because it draws, with exquisite precision, the line of demarcation between this activity in its normal state and this activity as exhibited in the monastic system.

He has explained the action of faith, in uniting the believer to Christ, and thus making him a good tree, capable of bearing good fruit. Faith works by love; but how? Our paragraph supplies the answer. "We inculcate such work as is necessary not to us, but to our neighbour, that is to say, love. And herein again are monastic institutions condemned, that their whole work and effort are directed to the object of bringing the founders' souls, and the souls of those struggling and toiling in the convents, to heaven. According to this, there is no need that we should seek for the salvation of others, but only for our own. Oh, how far is that from Christian love!" It is not possible to conceive a nobler appreciation of the genius and essence of Christianity, as the religion of self-sacrifice, than is shown in these few words. It goes far beyond the mere perception, which indeed the most rudimentary understanding of Christ's religion implies that no one, by merely casting up an account, in respect of personal gain and pleasure, between heaven and hell, and deciding that the balance is in favour of heaven, can constitute himself a Christian. Even if you take the true and high view of heaven, putting aside the question of profit and loss altogether, and looking upon heaven as a state of spiritual attainment, of moral health, you are still, says Luther in effect, not permitted as a Christian to step aside, and make it the main business of your life to nurse heavenly sentiments in your own soul, to tend the garden of the Lord in your own breast. No! The fundamental ordinance of the

Gospel—self-sacrifice, enjoins you to forget yourself and think of your neighbour. In your neighbour you are to see Christ; and, at the last day, the decisive question will be whether you did or did not give Christ, thus incarnated, a cup of cold water.

There are ever so many of these pastoral or paternal letters, sent out by Luther to all points of the compass. He is, as was hinted before, the veritable Pope of the vast portion of Christendom which, on the kindling of his beacon fire, awoke from unquiet sleep, and began to protest against the obscuration of the Gospel by the Roman Pontiff. Mankind are governed incomparably more by their habits than by their logical reasonings. The nations of Europe had been habituated for long centuries to a Pope; and though Laurentius Valla with his history, and Martin Luther with his Bible, had for millions of Christians logically and theologically demolished the Papacy, the great body of the people continued, in a vague, unconscious way, to look for something in the religious world correspondent to the discredited Pontiff of the seven hills. It was only by scoffers that Luther was *called* Pope, but millions of the most intelligent and devout Christians in the world practically looked to him for many years for that spiritual superintendence which they used to expect from the supreme Pontiff.

In point of fact he was, for about a quarter of a century, the unintentional, the informal but veritable realisation of his own grand and beautiful conception of a Primate of Christendom, as entertained at the time

of the Leipzig disputation. Transcendency of character and genius—transcendency of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of Christ—gave him a natural, unsolicited right to be the leader, for the time being, of the host of the Lord. A corresponding transcendency of qualification placed upon the head of Calvin—different as the two men were—the Protestant tiara which Luther wore until his death. He would be a surly and narrow-brained Protestant who should object to such a Papa of Christendom—elected by the inarticulate murmur of reverent esteem from the general Protestant population. But no Protestant Pope succeeded Calvin; and that not solely because no clerical man of Calvin's calibre has since appeared to focus the suffrage of Protestant Europe, but also because the vague but potent craving for a spiritual Papa had, in two generations, as good as died out among Protestant nations.

I, for one, should be glad to live under the rule of a Pope Luther, acknowledging his entirely Divine right to exercise, by natural superiority, powers of spiritual superintendence over average men.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A BUSY PONTIFF.

It is interesting to observe the ways and note the words of this Martin, Pope of Protestant Christendom. From Bohemia to Brabant, from Savoy to the waters of the Baltic, the sagacious, friendly, pious, and fatherly allocutions of our Papa go forth. One remarks, as curiously characteristic, their combination of profound modesty with the authoritative tone of one born to command. Since his boyhood, as readers know well, his compactness of faculty, decision of judgment, and fervour of temperament had impressed his influence upon all within his circle. He writes now like one habituated to command, but with more than the submissiveness of a great constitutional soldier, a Wellington for example, in relation to the Sovereign he obeys. The very idea of asserting his own originality does not occur to him, and his unaffected delight is to clothe his suggestions as nearly as possible in the words of Scripture. Adulation he reckons among the afflictions of life, and he is stung to sharp anger when he finds people making him the hierophant of a new doctrine, the setter up of a new sect. Those who call God's perennial truth "Lutheran doctrine" speak, he says, "with mouth of wicked

slander." The cordial warmth and genial earnestness of his letters form an agreeable contrast to the fierceness of his controversial treatises. They glow indeed; that was inevitable; the man's nature was glowing, and he never wrote a cold or languid page; but their glow is a mellow radiance of white and ruddy flame, in which is no foul smoke or lurid glare. Jets of ardent expression rise when some great, human, Divine principle, against which the Popish adversary has raged, is to be affirmed. That man's moral freedom, for example, should have been cabined, cribbed, confined by tyrannic routine, with its mechanical constraint, its tread-wheel piety, its monastic drill-exercise, incenses and amazes him. "God help us!" he exclaims. "Will nothing then teach us? Have we no sense, no ears? I say it the second time, God will have no forced service. I say it the third time—I say it a hundred thousand times—God will have no forced service!" The words occur in a letter to the Count of Mansfeld,* on the escape of a nun from her convent.

In addition to these pastoral, paternal, or pontifical letters, he has an immense private correspondence. He is every man's—especially every poor man's—servant, every good woman's friend. A girl nun—already alluded to—of noble family, has managed to break her fetters, and writes to Papa Martin asking him to further her scheme of getting married to some young man who, though not noble, is, in her eyes, all that could be wished. Luther writes that her matter completely

* De Wette, 591.

interests him, and that he agrees with her that the fact of her lover's not being noble, if only they sincerely love each other, is of no consequence. She may count upon him, Luther, to give her his best service; but as to any doubtful matters, he cannot take even her word in her own cause. "When more than one person is engaged in an affair, God has forbidden the pronouncing of judgment on the representation of only one side." All will, he trusts, go well, and it will be his endeavour to promote her true interest. "But take care that you seek God's blessing, so that you and your lover may share not only the passionate rapture of earthly love, but the grace and favour of God." Little touches come out sometimes of home-bred fireside tenderness which surprise one in so rugged and unconventional a man. "Give my kind regards to your wife and children, and *smile upon them sweetly in my name—arride meo nomine dulciter*." Think of that!

He never remits the duty, irksome as it is, of listening to the petitions and complaints of poor persons, and attempting to obtain relief for them. To him, for example, it is that the forester who has been wounded and crippled by a boar when hunting under the auspices of the prince, and is reduced in consequence to utter poverty, has recourse. Luther at once places the case before Spalatin for presentation to Frederick. The humble request of the cripple is that he shall be allowed some corn wherewith to make bread. "I know," says Luther, in the tone in which it becomes a Pontiff to admonish a Prince, "that the services he performed and

the dangers he ran are due to princes from their subjects; but I know also that it is the duty of princes to have a thought for their subjects, and that they too frequently pass all degrees of moderation in hunting, and in using up men in this particular service. On grounds, therefore, not only of charity but of justice, this poor man has a claim to compensation."

He was never too busy to undertake the business of such applicants, but it most severely taxed his patience when placehunters from distant countries came begging his interest at court, and all sorts of obtrusive mortals heaped their burdens on his willing back. What with public and private duty, the ramparts of tyrannic usurpation to be scaled on this hand, the dragon of anarchy to be quelled on that, treatises to be composed, sermons to be preached, the Bible to be translated, Divine service to be remodelled, monks and nuns to be provided for, letters to be written, more was laid upon him than human strength could stand. Even *his* extraordinary powers of body and mind began to be exhausted, and signs of cerebral trouble, in the shape of afflictive ringing in the ears and liability to giddiness and fainting fits, to appear. But he bore up with heroic fortitude, a groan only escaping him now and then—a groan hard-wrung, such as might have heaved the chest of Atlas when he staggered under the weight of the firmament. "*Orbis*," he says once, "*incipit mihi incumbere*, the weight of the whole world is pressing on my shoulders." He knows that his enemies are indefatigable in propagating calumnious reports of him, and virulent

hatred and injustice cannot but be painful to a kind-hearted man. But he contrives to treat them with silent scorn, or to make a jest of them. He tells Spalatin once that a legate, or whatever else he may call himself, from King Ferdinand, has been on a mission to Wittenberg, to see what kind of man he (Luther) is, and what kind of life he leads. The account given of Luther at the Court of Ferdinand, this emissary ingenuously stated, was that he went about armed and guarded to escape assassination, and that he spent his leisure in taverns, ale-houses, and places of still worse fame. "I know not with what other honours my head shines refulgent at that court. But I am seasoned to lies."

Like all confiding, fearless, and generous correspondents, he found himself cruelly victimised sometimes by the publication of letters hastily struck off, and not intended for the eye of the world. His relations with Erasmus had been growing more and more delicate and precarious, as Erasmus drew on more carefully the kid gloves of prudence, and Luther took off his coat for the work. All the more, therefore, did he desire to say publicly of Erasmus only what he had carefully weighed and measured; and his annoyance was keen when foolish, or false, or interested persons printed what he had privately written on the great humanist. First to be importuned, and then to be betrayed, was, he said, vehemently unpleasant.*

But he could himself, on occasion, be importunate

* De Wette, 533.

enough with a friend in the matter of publication, and was capable of taking liberties when his importunity was of none effect. Melanchthon, for example, who had been often urged by him to publish his Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, and had set his face like a flint against the proposal, was surprised, one fine morning, to find the said commentaries, in book form, in his hands, with a letter of Luther's figuring as preface. In the said letter * our Papa appears in his most waggishly jubilant mood. "Be angry and sin not; speak with thine own heart on thy bed and be still; I am the man who edits these annotations of yours, and sends you yourself. If you do not like the figure you cut, no matter, so long as you please us. You are the sinner, if there has been any sin in the business: why did you not edit them yourself? Why did you let me so often urge you in vain to edit them? This is my apology. I choose to be, and to be called, your thief, no whit alarmed at your complaints or accusations." Possibly, however, Melanchthon may have shrunk, he suggests, from the censure of Popish critics. "Well, let them do better, say I." They boast, these critics, of Thomas of Aquinum as having written with the highest ability on St. Paul. What they falsely attribute to Thomas, "I truly attribute to you." If they do not like this, Luther will take the risk of offending them. Nay, he is prepared to irritate them still further. "What if I say that the commentaries of Jerome and Origen are mere trifles and

* De Wette, 424.

absurdities if they are compared to your annotations?" But Melanchthon may ask what is the good of awakening the resentment of the supreme geniuses of the Papal faction. "Be as humble as you please; but allow me to boast in your person. Who forbids the consummate geniuses to produce better commentaries if they can, and thus convict me of temerity? When better commentaries appear, I shall be particularly happy to see them."

Instead of expressing contrition for his present act, he threatens other feats in the way of literary purloining. Unless Melanchthon looks sharp and anticipates him, he will make off with the commentaries on Genesis, Matthew, and John, which he knows to have been written. Does Melanchthon object that commentaries are not wanted—that Scripture needs no candle but Scripture? Luther will be alongside of him there. If his commentaries were like those of Jerome, Origen, or Thomas, pretentiously illuminating, or expanding, or sophisticating, or adding to Scripture, then he might keep them, for all that Luther would say to the contrary, to himself. Those famous people "wrote commentaries in which they delivered their own opinions rather than interpreted Paul or Christ." But Melanchthon's commentaries deserve rather the name of *indices*, their purpose being, more expressly than any such compositions in existence, to elicit the exact meaning of Scripture. You cannot have too much of such annotation as simply places you in the immediate presence of the Scripture writers. "I ask no pardon if

in all this I offend you. You rather are the offender and have need of pardon."

When we reflect upon the subtle, ravenous, and jealous nature of the passion for distinction—how it insinuates itself into all conclaves, all academies, all scientific societies, all political bodies—how it divides friend from friend and brother from brother—and recollect that it was unquestionably one of the strongest natural cravings in the heart of Luther—we cannot but own that there was the manliest generosity in his thus forcing Melanchthon up the steps of the temple of fame, and insisting upon it that he, and not Luther, should bear the palm among the theologians of the Reformation.

Curious things—affording quaint little glimpses into past history—occur in the correspondence. Let us make room for one. The immense revolution transacting itself among the Christians had naturally excited the Jewish population. Luther hoped for great things in the way of their conversion, now that the offences of the Papacy were being removed, and way made for the clear shining of the Gospel light. Among the new converts was one Bernhard, and a letter to him from Luther, which has no date, but seems to be rightly placed by De Wette about the close of 1523, makes very vivid for us the general aspect of the Jewish question at the period.

He begins with the frank remark that the conversion of Jews is almost universally suspected of insincerity both among Jews and Christians. The Jews allege

that no one has left their ranks and entered those of their adversaries unless he had first, by some flagrant offence, made Jew society too hot to hold him. The Christians allege that Jew converts either relapse into Judaism openly or are Jews at heart while Christian in name. He then recalls an incident said to have occurred in the time of the Emperor Sigismund. One of the courtiers, a Jew, had with much entreaty prevailed on Sigismund to let him declare himself a Christian. At length he was admitted by baptism into the Church. But the Emperor prepared for his faith a severe and terrible test. Two fires were kindled by the imperial order. One of these was proclaimed to be a fire lighted by the Jews to consume deserters from Judaism, the other to be a fire lighted by the Christians for the death of apostates to Judaism. Sigismund commanded the newly baptised Israelite to choose between the two, observing that, having just been baptised and sanctified, he was not likely to be better prepared to die at any subsequent period. Whereupon the miserable man, whether it was that his faith had been feigned or that he had lost his wits,* elected to die a Jew, leapt into the Christian fire, and was consumed. Many other instances, adds Luther, could be given to show the problematic nature of Jewish conversions.

The cause, however, of their bad repute he believes to be not so much the wickedness of the Jews as the hideous darkening of the truth, and the frightful

* Thus I, somewhat dubiously, understand the expression: *vel fictæ vel imbecillis fidei suæ testis.*—De Wette, 568.

corruption of manners, under the Papacy. "But now, when the golden light of the Gospel rises and shines, there is hope that many Jews may be seriously and faithfully converted, as you and some others are, of that remnant of the seed of Abraham destined to be saved by grace. For He who has begun the good work will bring it to perfection, nor allow His Word to return to Him void."

It is worthy of note that though Luther in this letter specifies the bad doctrine and bad living of the Roman Catholic priesthood as causes of the invincible opposition of the Jews, he makes no mention of persecution or oppression on the part of Christians as conducing to the same result. That they did so—that Shylock was sinned against as well as sinning—admits of no debate; but this letter of Luther's is a strong, though negative, proof that the mediæval proscription of the Jews had not made such an impression upon the popular imagination in Germany as sufficed to attract pity towards them as a wronged and suffering race.

Of course it formed part of the thousand and one avocations of Luther to give advice in cases of conscience. If husband and wife fell out, he accepted it as a normal duty of the Christian pastor to do his best to remove the discrepancy by searching inquiry into its cause, and decisive fixing of the blame in the proper quarter. He was perpetually consulted on the meaning of particular passages of Scripture; and when a devout person found himself confronted with some spiritual difficulty, awed by some mystery of Divine government

or human fate, his first thought was to have recourse to Papa Luther. One of the letters thus occasioned * is too characteristic to be passed over. John von Rechenberg, an eminent Bohemian, addressed to him, through Count Albert of Mansfeld, a request to deliver an opinion on the question whether, if one died without faith, God might save him. It was indeed the difficulty which in all the Christian ages has agonised believing souls of tender sensibility and vivid imagination, and which never was asked with more beseeching earnestness than in the present day—Is there any hope for the lost?

Luther addresses himself to the task before him with deep apprehension of its grave and solemn nature. The difficulty, he says, has been felt in his own circle, and not only so but by the very highest souls in all times, by Origen, for instance, and his peers. To Origen it had seemed all too hard, stern, plainly at variance with Divine goodness, that God should have formed creatures for eternal pain. And they quoted from the Psalms and other Scriptures words appearing to prove that God could not forget to be gracious, and that all men will, sooner or later, come to the knowledge of the truth. Nay, they go farther, and hold that the devil himself will finally be saved.

Luther, as all who understand the make of his mind must be prepared to hear, though he has none but gentle and respectful terms to apply to Origen and his kindred, does not profess the slightest sympathy with

* De Wette, 570.

their views. The principle he lays down, as regulating the entire discussion, is that implicit reliance must be placed upon Scripture, and that it is calmly to be accepted as better that men, angels, and devils should go to perdition than that God should not speak the truth in His Word. It is the most precious and essential virtue of faith that it declines prying into the mysteries of God's will—does not cross-examine Him as to why and wherefore—but believes in His mercy and in His righteousness, although reason, sense, and experience denote them as vindictiveness and injustice. It is the office of faith to believe things that do not appear. "The eye of nature is to be torn out, and faith alone to take its place." It is worse than useless to try to get rid of the difficulty by thinking. This is commonly done by persons young in the Christian life, unexercised in faith, the light of nature still strongly influencing them; and the peril is great that they may fall into antagonism and hatred towards God, in which case it is hard to deal with them. Young believers therefore ought peremptorily to forbid their minds to speculate on the Divine judgments.

If the form of the question is whether God can, either in the article of death, or after death, impart faith, the answer of course, says Luther, is that He can. But it is impossible to prove that He does. At all events there is no salvation without faith. Various well-known passages of Scripture are quoted in proof of this proposition, and reasons are adduced for concluding that the passages which seem to favour the final

universality of salvation cannot bear this construction. In the end of the letter he reiterates the advice to abstain from high-flying attempts to penetrate the blinding, burning light that encircles the throne of God, and to take the practical way to God's heart through the manhood of Christ. "Why was the man Christ given us, to be our leader to the Father, if we let Him alone, pass Him by, start for Heaven in the strength of our own virtue, and undertake to measure the judgments of God?"

## CHAPTER V.

### CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP.

Before leaving the Wartburg, Luther, as we know, had irreversibly made up his mind on the subject of monastic vows. Every man and woman, he held, who had taken those vows could sinlessly discard them. Enforced celibacy he regarded as in all cases a grievous iniquity, and its cruel and baneful influence reached a climax of badness in the enforced celibacy of the clergy.

In the practical enterprise, therefore, of reforming the Church and purifying the social life of Germany, he directed his energies unremittingly to the breaking up of monasteries, and to the restoration of woman to her place of honour in the house of the pastor. In the monastic order he saw great bodies of men and women socially paralysed in respect of industrial production and the continuation of the race, disjoined from family relationship, and appended as janizaries to the Papacy. It was one of the cardinal principles of his reformation that God's natural arrangements are statutory. The first step towards making one a Christian is to make him a man. Celestialise humanity if you will; but take humanity with you to be celestialised, humanity of the stout European type, wide-awake, industrial,

scientific; with passions not orientalised into dreaminess, or emasculated into feebleness, but sending warm blood from strong hearts into blooming cheeks. Thou shalt not spoil a citizen in the hope of making a saint.

Luther, therefore, exerted himself with conscientious earnestness to encourage and assist monks and nuns in leaving their convents. He would have added exhortations to them to follow up the abandonment of their convents by entrance into the married state, had he not found this quite superfluous, the emancipated men and maidens flying off into the groves of matrimony like blackbirds and throstles in April, frequently with less assurance of adequate provision for themselves and their progeny than can be counted on by song-birds at that exuberant season. Under these circumstances marrying men of approved probity, sense, and substance were in demand; and Luther always had a stimulating word for any of his men correspondents who could be reasonably looked to for help in the work of turning white-faced nuns into ruddy wives and mothers. Spalatin was thus admonished, and would have taken the advice sooner than he did had not his gentle, noble ways been indispensable to the comfort of poor old dying Frederick.

Next to the incipiency of heaven in his own soul through the sense of Divine love, Luther had, in the years at which we are now glancing, no greater delight than that of acting as counsellor and spiritual father to congregations appealing to him from many lands for aid in rearing the sanctuary and remodelling the service.

Stern as had been his rebuke of those who introduced riot and uproar into the operations of Church reform, careful as he had been to respect the sensibilities of weak brethren, he never denied that new wine wants new bottles, that visible changes must follow those wrought in the secret places of the soul, in short, that worship ought to correspond with belief. As time went on he quietly but inexorably insisted that images should be removed from the reformed churches in Wittenberg, and that the sacrifice of the mass should be replaced by the Lord's Supper.

As the Christian, not the clergyman, was in Luther's view the type and standard of the personal Christian life, so the Christian congregation was his type of the Christian Church. Admitting no difference, except that of office and delegation, between layman and clergyman, he admitted no essential difference or gradation between one class of clergymen and another. A distinctive Divine right, privilege, or potency, belonging to bishops, he absolutely disallowed. He pronounced the very expression "a spiritual order" to be "false." All clergymen, whether called bishops, presbyters, pastors, or parish priests, were the servants of the Church, in the sense of the congregation. He devoted a short treatise to the task of proving that a Christian assembly or congregation possesses the right and the might to judge doctrine and to call its own minister.*

It is not easy to see how Carlstadt and his spasmodic

* *Dass eine christliche Versammlung oder Gemeinde Recht und Macht habe, alle Lehre zu urtheilen und Lehrer zu berufen*, 1523.

friends could have taken a more democratic view of the Church than this; but it must be owned that the frantic exaggeration of the heavenly prophets had a reactionary effect upon Luther himself, infecting him with some slight fear and distrust of Christian freedom. He became almost too vehement in his cry for submission to the secular power, and in his injunction to Christian congregations to accept, in all external matters, the ruling of the civil magistrate. In treatises of his which preceded the great disappointment and disenchantment consequent on the attempt at physical force reformation, such as that on the freedom of a Christian man, and his address to the nobles and people of Germany, there is an exultant faith in the universal priesthood and universal kingship of Christians which seems to be toned down in his later works.

These remarks must not be understood to ascribe to Luther a complete withdrawal of confidence from the Christian democracy. He never doubted that the church or congregation held powers from Christ, and that no pastor could be rightly appointed without regard to the will and choice of the people. The call of the church was in his view an essential and indispensable element in the constitution of the pastoral relationship. No government, no patron, no ecclesiastical authority, could impose a minister upon a congregation. On the other hand, he viewed congregational freedom as compatible with, and conditioned by, the unity of the Christian Church. He entirely approved of the harmonious and co-operative action, in the appointment of ministers, of

some Christian authority, whether of bishop or of presbytery, external to particular congregations. No Christian congregation could exist for itself alone. An inalienable part of its duty was to contribute to that universal diffusion of righteousness, peace, brotherly affection, and social virtue which Christ commissioned his followers to bring about. As it is totally impossible, in ordinary circumstances, for a good man to stand alone—an essential element in human goodness being sympathetic and benevolent association with other men—so it is impossible for a Christian church to be in a state of spiritual health, of living Christianity, without being in unity and fellowship with other Christian churches. This appears to require that some method shall be provided by which those other congregations may be certified that the essentials of the faith are not abandoned in any particular congregation. No congregation had a right to violate Christian faith or manners without incurring the penalty of ceasing to be in fellowship with the general body of congregations, that is to say, with the Church.

Such were Luther's general views. In the revolutionary ferment, however, and state of violent transition, amid which he had to perform the difficult task of organising the rejuvenescent Church in Germany, it was inevitable that, being a sensible man, he should have respect to soundness of results rather than to regularity of methods. He was himself, as has been already remarked, the universal bishop or pope of Germany, or rather of North-Western Christendom;

indefatigable in visitation of his diocese: now at Borna, now at Altenburg, now at Zwickau, now at Eilenburg, now at Weimar, now at Erfurth; now raying forth episcopal counsel as far as Dantzig on the north and Savoy on the south; bent always upon the essential point of settling preachers of the Gospel among flocks willing to hear them. If he could work with the magistrates, or with the patron of a living, well and good; he did not trouble himself with nice questions as to the line of separation between civil and spiritual matters. If the pastor he commended to a church that applied to him was not pleasing to the patron, as when the Elector objected to his nominee in Altenburg, he avoided extremity of resistance, and contented himself with making sure that the man chosen was on the anti-Papal side. True, also, to those instincts of practicality which put him in accord with the great evolutionary currents of world-history, he preferred in all cases a *minimum* of change to any avoidable interference with existing arrangements. It was not a new Church that he was founding, but an immortal Church that he was rescuing from temporary hebetude and defacement.

He did not wholly discard the mass, but modified it in accordance with his fundamental conception of Christian worship. The saying or singing of mass could not, in the first place, be a sacrifice for sin. The sacrifice of Christ was the sole, sufficient, never-to-be-repeated sacrifice for the sins of the world. The celebration of mass could not, in the second place, be a piece of meritorious service, a good work in

consideration of which men obtained the remission of sins. Man obtains salvation through the merits of Christ only. The mass, therefore, could only be, like any other act of worship, a channel of grace, an occasion for exercising the Divine life. All saying or singing of masses for money he abolished. Private masses were declared to be at variance with the essentially social character of the Lord's Supper. Into this last, socially administered, the old masses gradually changed.

His general views on reformed worship may be gathered from a letter which he penned in August, 1523, on the modifications to be introduced into the service in the Foundation Church of Wittenberg.* Seldom, perhaps never, in the history of the world has a change so profound and comprehensive, in all that related to principle and spirit, been announced by visible alterations so slight. No contrast can be sharper in principle and idea than that between worship celebrated by a priesthood, as a means of propitiating the Deity, and worship consisting in homage of spirit, soul, and heart, in acknowledgment of the supremacy of Infinite Goodness, Justice, and Love, in meditation on Christian truth, and in adoration of Divine Holiness. But the alteration in externals was slight. Luther specified little more as essential to worship than that Scripture should be read, with intelligent exposition, that the *Te Deum* should be uttered in the morning service and the *Magnificat* in that of the afternoon; and that there should be singing of hymns.

* De Wette, 522.

The central idea of worship, as conceived by Luther, was that it is a *ministration* of the Word, not a *performance* of sacerdotal rites. In signalising the preaching of the Word as the distinctive note of Christian worship he made a priceless contribution to the cause of spiritual civilisation, and one which sets intelligent Protestantism in a position of conspicuous advantage over any other religious system that has claimed the belief of men. The Christian pulpit cannot indeed be pronounced a monopoly of the Protestant side of Christendom. There were great preachers before Luther, and there have been great preachers within the Roman Catholic Church since his day. But in the Protestant Church, as compared with the Popish, the accent has been laid on preaching. The manifest effect of this is to make Protestant Christianity, involving freedom of judgment, an immense and potent agency of adult education. Unless the preacher is incompetent, the hearer must be stirred to mental activity by being constantly appealed to; by being encouraged to verify his faith; by being accustomed to argument. A peasantry whose worship is done for them by mass priests will sink into intellectual torpor, like the peasantry of Spain; a peasantry taught by its preachers to search the Scriptures, and to track the subtleties of theological controversy, learns to answer every question by asking another, and produces a Burns and a Carlyle. We constantly forget, but ought vividly to remember, that Christianity swept into its current, and bore along with it, in the first Christian centuries,

the fruit and outcome of the best moral philosophies of antiquity. The highest utterances of Platonic and Stoic ethics, as we have them summarised by Cicero, agree with the New Testament ethics of self-sacrificing kindness. The pulpit, occupied by Christian preachers quite worthy of the name, would not only call men to salvation by faith in Christ, but would apply to the problems of individual, domestic, social, and political life, the principles of Christian ethics, and the maxims of moral philosophy. The Bible is indisputably a mind-moving, thought-producing body of literature; and the country which has effective Protestant preachers possesses, under another name, a professor of moral philosophy in every parish, with the Bible for his handbook.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS.

It need hardly be said that Luther regarded no part of Divine worship with more tender and glowing intensity of interest than the service of song. With reference to the accompaniments of worship generally he cherished no narrow or fanatical notions, but believed that all that was comely in every art might, as opportunity offered, be associated with congregational worship; this reservation only being made, that no adjunct to the service for which Scriptural warrant could not be intelligently pleaded should be imposed on the conscience of the people, and that no freakish extravagance, or frivolity, or irreverence, should violate the universal rule of decency and order. "I am by no means," he said, "of the opinion cherished by some fantastically spiritual persons, that all arts ought to be struck down and renounced in homage to the Gospel. On the contrary, I would gladly behold all arts, and most of all the art of music, occupying a place in the service of Him from whom they draw their origin, and who has bestowed them on us as a gift." He recognised the duty of making the service of God in this manner attractive, especially to the young, to whom the godless world is

so profuse of allurements, and called upon all Christians who had art-gift to consecrate it to Christ. His own vein of poetic genius, real and fine though of small range, he worked with joyful energy, to the end of supplying the new Church with hymns and psalms and spiritual songs.

It was not, however, in the calm and pacific operations of building up the Church that his poetic genius first found voice. It was in the agony and clash of conflict, it was when he saw others attaining to a glory for which he had often yearned, mounting the pyre and being encircled by the flames of martyrdom, that the words with which his heart was full rose to his lips in song.

Nowhere except in Saxony itself had the Gospel of Grace met with more eager acceptance than in the Netherlands. In Antwerp, in a convent of Augustines, the enthusiasm of the new faith glowed so brightly that the authorities, stimulated by the Popish advisers of the Emperor Charles, whose power in this quarter was liable to no such hindrances as in the German Reich, had recourse to the old orthodox method of extinguishing it. It will be remembered that, in the fore-front of Luther's offending against the majesty of Christian power, as represented by Legate and Kaiser at Worms, stood the appalling item that he had denied that heretics should be put to death. That sword of fire which, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, had been upheld, in the face of mankind, for twelve hundred years, as the guardian of truth, had been declared by this audacious innovator to be an ensign not of Christ, but

of Antichrist. It was now to be determined, on the stage of Europe, in a strife continuing for centuries, whether the Pope's and the Kaiser's method, or Luther's method, for the maintenance and protection of religious truth, was to be finally owned and established. In Germany, Luther was beginning to have his way, but in the Netherlands the fiery sword could still be paraded as the symbol of Christian order. On the 1st of July, 1523, at Brussels, two young men, one a mere stripling, Henry Voes and John Esch, were burnt at the stake. A third, Lambert Thorn, was to have been executed at the same time, but, for some unexplained reason, was taken back to prison. Ultimately he, too, seems to have died a martyr, but of this we have no certainty. Luther, at all events, wrote to him in prison not only in terms of sympathy and condolence, but with fervent congratulation on the privilege of suffering such things for the sake of Christ. As for himself, he said—expressing a sentiment which we know to have been often in his mind—he was, alas! not held worthy of the like honour. "Wretched man that I am—the first, as I boastfully reflect, to teach these Gospel truths, the last to be deemed worthy, and perhaps never to be thought worthy, to be a bearer, with you, of your chains—a partaker, with you, of the fire! But I shall triumph over my wretchedness, and find consolation in my distress, for your chains are my chains, your prisons and fires are mine, since I confess Christ and preach as you do, and both suffer along with and congratulate you." *

* De Wette, 576.

The tumult of exultation and distress, the transports of sacred joy at the spectacle of faith triumphing over mortal pain, accompanied by the deep ground-swell of sorrow in view of the atrocity of extinguishing young life by fire for accepting the salvation of Christ, so moved Luther that his feelings became rhythmic, and he poured forth a ballad, rugged indeed and with little grace or ornament of composition, but tingling, every line of it, with sincerity and intensity, in commemoration of the Brussels martyrdom. Briefly, with terse and smiting force, the essential facts are stated, in simple historical sequence, as the popular mind requires. The place, the names of the youths, the elaborate attempts of the "sophists" from Louvain to convince or bewilder them, the courage and constancy with which they stand against the wiles of the sophists, are lucidly detailed. Then follow the stripping from them of their conventual garments, and their degradation from the priestly office, on all which they look with a smile. Two great fires are then kindled, every onlooker being amazed at the fortitude with which the young creatures scorn the prospect of pain.

> "With joy they stepped into the flame,
> God's praises calmly singing.
> Strange pangs of rage, amazement, shame,
> The sophists' hearts are wringing;
> For God, they feel, is here."

The poetic faculty thus awakened was diligently employed by Luther in the preparation of hymns for use in Divine worship. Some he translated from the

Latin of the mediæval Church, being, as usual, much too practical to let himself be prejudiced by the mere fact that they had been composed or used under the sanction of the Papacy. Several were translations or adaptations of Hebrew Psalms. It was indeed at the feet of the poets of Israel that Luther learned to sing. Loving the Bible as a whole, and finding occupation for his intellectual faculty chiefly in the Epistles of Paul, he set his heart on the Psalms with a transcendency of affection. They were for him a fountain of inexhaustible delight—an Eden in the heart of Eden—a place of sweetest bloom and freshest coolness in the midst of the garden of God. It cannot, of course, be said that in any instance he approached the merit of the Psalms as works of poetic art. The poetic excellence of the best Hebrew Psalms is of that highest and rarest kind which defies the tooth not only of time, but of translation, and survives in prose even when the language of the original is no longer spoken among men, and when the melodies to which the poems were first sung have been forgotten. This highest excellence depends on perennial truth to the organic facts of human feeling, and on perennial aptness and impressiveness of imaginative embodiment. The imaginative passion which sees mountains skipping like lambs at the presence of God cannot be antiquated until atheism has worked the God-believing instinct out of man, or until mountains cease to steady the plains. The lyric ecstasy which makes of the Infinite God a shepherd of His people, and of the good man a tree growing by a river, loses little in translation. Such symbolism

is of all climates, and cannot grow old. When the excellence is not of this supreme order, translation tells more against it. The originality and power of Luther's hymns depend on a stammering intensity of feeling which breaks into rhythmic chant or cadence. But no heart of modern man has rung so true to that grand note of Hebrew song, the faith of Israel in his God, as Luther's. In the most celebrated of all his poetical pieces, composed not at this time, but a few years hence, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*, the imagery is derived from the forty-sixth Psalm. He applies the Hebrew similitude of God as a high tower in a way that irresistibly recalls those castellated crags which, during the whole of the feudal time, were places of strength in Europe. But the first line, which is from the Hebrew, is the finest in the piece. The merit of the rest lies in its panting intensity and clang as of charging squadrons. It may be said of Luther's hymns generally that they are characterised by a rugged but fundamentally melodious rhythm, a piercing intensity and expressiveness, with tender, lovely, picturesque touches here and there. Above all, they are sincere. They seem to thrill with an intensity of feeling beyond their power of expression, like the glistening of stars whose silence speaks of God.

That Luther had a keen relish for the beautiful in language and in music, apart from the purpose to which these were devoted, admits of no question; but artistic ambition and æsthetic admiration played a small part in the impulse under which he produced his verses. Even

the relief and comfort they afforded him through expressing his own feelings were with him trivial commendations, as compared with their use in bringing home Gospel truth to heart and conscience. The melodious cadences and clear and brilliant phrases of sacred song were for him golden characters by which the knowledge of God was to be imprinted on the memory. Never is the singleness of the man's heart more conspicuous—the concentration of his soul upon one grand life-purpose more evident—than when, with congenial toil, he sets to simple words and simple tunes, for children to sing, the main verities of Christian faith, the main facts of Christian story. The poet never for a moment ceases to be the preacher, the instructor, the reformer. And his words of stirring invitation to kindred spirits to help him in providing the Reformed Church with service in song called forth hymns worthy to stand beside his own, though perhaps in no instance quite equal to his. Early in 1524—a tiny streamlet destined to swell into a river—Luther's first collection of hymns appeared in Wittenberg. It contained eight pieces, five by Luther, three by a zealous and courageous poet-preacher of Suabia, by name Paul Speratus. A tiny brook, made up of eight silver threads trickling from the rock—and lo! it has become a river of song that we can trace through the modern centuries. Luther gave the initiative for countless psalms and hymns and grave sweet melodies, sung by the Protestant vanguard of mankind, round the watch-fires of Gustavus Adolphus, in the opulent homes of England and the craggy glens

of Scotland, carried out to the far West by the Pilgrim Fathers, cheering the hearts of a thousand missionaries, and, amid harsh conquest and grasping commerce, coming as a credible revelation of God's grace and man's good-will to the weary millions of Hindostan. The best religious inspiration of these last ages is in spiritual song.

It would be unjust to draw a hard and fast line between the music of the Mediæval Church and that of which Luther may be named the father. It is not true that he can be described, as some fond admirers would describe him, as "the man to whose sole efforts the improved music of the Church is owing." Vehement—too vehement—as was Luther's repugnance to, and rejection of, whatever bore the image and superscription of the Papacy, his mind was never clouded with a doubt as to the continuity of life, doctrine, and, in essentials, even of worship, between the old Church and the new. From first to last he explicitly maintained that his was the true Catholic doctrine—not that of Scripture merely, but that of the best authorities of the Church; and he was incapable of discarding anything in the music of the Church merely because it had been appropriated by Rome. But the judicious historian of music, having made these acknowledgments, proceeds to point out that, in one department of Church music, Luther, not by invention strictly so called, but by specialisation and accentuation, was practically an important innovator. He gave unprecedented significance to the congregational hymn. "Its value," says Emil Naumann, "as a medium for bringing the

congregation into closer communion with the spirit of the service cannot, when compared with that of the hitherto used Latin chorale, be over-estimated. Although there was no lack of hymns in the mother-tongue in the Catholic Liturgy, yet their use was so restricted that when Luther assigned to them so prominent a part in the Reformed service it was regarded as quite a new feature. With the Catholics, hymns in the mother-tongue were only used at processions and on high festivals, and were then sung by the congregation only at Christmas, Easter, and certain other high feast-days. With these exceptions, the Catholic congregational song consisted of short musical phrases, chanted by the priest, to which the people either responded or added their voices to the refrain sung by the choristers from the altar. The part assigned to the people then was but a very subordinate one." * Naumann estimates that, within fifty years after Luther's death, progress had been made in Church music which may be measured against what had been made in a thousand years before the dawn of the Reformation. To himself personally he attributes a highly considerable gift in relation to music, referring to his enthusiastic appreciation of Josquin des Près and of Ludwig Senfel as demonstrating not only the soundness of his knowledge of the art, but the fineness and acuteness of his critical judgment in discriminating the merits of composers. "How intimately conversant with the rules of polyphony," says Naumann, "must the critic have been to have detected in how far

* "History of Music." By Emil Naumann. Cassell and Co.

Josquin was tied or not by academical lore!" In Josquin Luther discerned that free force of natural genius which masters the material in which it works. The notes followed Josquin as he would; other masters were vassals to the notes, and could not choose but follow as *they* would. "Josquin's compositions," said Luther, "are blithe and gay, free, gentle, and graceful, neither forced nor unnatural, nor bound by rigid laws, but free like the song of birds." The authority of Naumann may suffice for the assertion that remarks like these prove Luther to have been an expert in music, but they will interest the general reader chiefly as showing that here as elsewhere his nature was fundamentally hopeful and of good cheer, instinct with melody and mirth, in glad accord with notes of music, and songs of birds, and all bright and winged things. Essentially it is the same Luther we have all through—the man for whom the Gospel is glad tidings of great joy, the man whose idea of godliness is an opening of the heart to receive the grace of God, the man whose indignation burns as a furnace against Antichrist in every form, whether pope, prince, demagogue, or devil, in so far forth as said Antichrist makes the grace of God of none effect and interposes the malarious fogs of earth between man and the light of heaven.

It is almost unnecessary to observe that in applying his principles of reform to social worship Luther carefully avoided that worst of blunders, the prescription of one unchanging type or scheme of ceremony and ritual. When his good friend Nicholas Hausmann

wrote to him putting forward, with easily imaginable commendations, the notion that advantage might be derived from the assembling of a Conference or Council to frame some one programme of public worship, to be used in all churches, he sent a short but important letter in reply, in which the plausible fallacies of the commonplace man were conclusively disposed of. In Councils generally he avowed himself to have little faith; and it was living freedom, not dead and fixed regularity, that he aimed at in social worship. It is unmistakably plain that if there had been an Act of Uniformity in existence, to stereotype the worship of the German churches, his first step towards improvement would have been its abolition. "If one church," he wrote, "does not spontaneously imitate another in things external, what need is there of compulsion by means of Council decrees, which straightway are turned into laws and strangling cords of the soul? Let one church imitate another if it likes, or, if it does not, let it enjoy its own ways and manners. The essential point is that there shall be spiritual unity in faith and Word. Diversity and variety in externals if you will."

Does it not humiliate one a little, and insinuate some slight scepticism as to the majestic constancy of mankind in the march of progress, to reflect on the comprehensive practical contempt which Protestant Christians have been pleased, in the intervening centuries, to pour upon this deliverance of Luther on the freedom of Christian worship? Christians in England subjecting

themselves for any number of centuries, under the rod of Parliamentary law, to the obligation of going through the same routine of Prayer-book service, Christians in Scotland gravely debating as to the "innovation" of kneeling instead of standing in prayer, and the rightness or wrongness of aiding the natural voice by instrumental music in praise—furnish sad comment on the breadth of Luther's views as to Christian worship.

His sovereign common-sense apprised him, however, that mere change for its own sake, mere freakish volatility and thirst for excitement, ought to be avoided in public worship, were it for no other cause than the deadly exhaustion they entail. In another letter to Hausmann * he expresses the sharpest contempt for those incurably frivolous persons who have not mind enough for faith and fixity in anything, who rush to every sermon and service where there is the sparkle of novelty, and no sooner cease to be titillated by novelty than they complain of oppressive dulness. While not only sanctioning but positively prizing variation in congregational worship, he never for a moment relinquished or relaxed the principle that worship must conform to the spirit of Christ.

Passages might be found in his letters capable of colourable interpretation in favour of the extreme Puritan contention that nothing may be introduced into congregational worship for which no warrant can be adduced from the practice of the first Christians, recorded in the New Testament. But this was not

* De Wette, 555.

his deliberate or final opinion. He laid it down, indeed, that nothing can be authoritatively imposed upon churches which is not based upon Scriptural precept or precedent.* But between authoritative imposition, which enslaves the conscience, and right of free adoption there is a great gulf fixed; and that the conspicuous absence from the New Testament of one binding model of congregational worship should amount to a positive law of negation, denying to Christians all variation in worship, is a proposition too monstrous to have occurred to Luther's mind. On essentials he insisted with peremptory dogmatism. But in forms and ceremonies, in attitude and dress, in use of service-book or expatiation in extemporary prayer, the limits of freedom were to be as wide as the requirements of decency and order, of spirit and of truth. And since worship was an act of intelligent homage to God, of vivid recipiency of Divine influence, of distinct confession of sin, of clear profession of faith, and of reasonable praise, it followed that dead language was to be discarded, and that Protestant nations should worship God in their mother tongue.

* *Nihil prorsus geri debet in cultu Dei, sine certo verbo Dei.*—De Wette, 461.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LUTHER AND ERASMUS.

In 1524 the lustre of Erasmus, now not far from three score, had begun to wane, but his intellectual supremacy was not yet substantially impaired or formally challenged. Popes were glad to take counsel with him. His friendship was a privilege of princes, his conversation a luxury of kings. It may be questioned whether, since that time, any man has swayed Europe so comprehensively, so genially, by right of mind alone. He was a lover of peace, a hater of all who stirred up strife, and many eyes turned towards him as the only man who could break the influence of Luther.

While the boy was uplifting his voice in the streets of Eisenach—while the youth was wrestling for light in his Erfurth cell—Erasmus had been preparing Luther's way for him. He had done so in a spirit of moderation, anxiously deprecating collision between the old and the new. Though his tone was rational, Erasmus was no rationalist. "Some," wrote the late Dr. James Hamilton, an excellent judge on the point, "call him (Erasmus) a rationalist and the father of them. But if they mean that he was an unbeliever, they are utterly

wrong." Gibbon, indeed, could not forego the sweet illusion of having Erasmus on the same side with himself. "I have sometimes thought," says Gibbon, "of writing a Dialogue of the Dead, in which Lucian, Erasmus, and Voltaire should mutually acknowledge the danger of exposing an old superstition to the contempt of the blind and fanatic multitude." But it would have been indeed a dead Erasmus, an Erasmus with the spiritual personality extinguished, that we should have had in the Dialogue of Gibbon. The labours of Erasmus on the text of the New Testament were the natural and indispensable prelude to a reformation based on an appeal to the original Christian inspiration. Luther, however, was too differently constituted from Erasmus to do him justice. What the one called moderation the other called sin. Erasmus gradually withdrew from Luther even the qualified approbation he had at first expressed. Luther's distrust sharpened into keen hostility and fervent anger. Erasmus became for him the type of all those who serve God by halves, and, while declaiming on the beauty of truth, are apologists for institutions that buttress falsehood.

Open war between the antagonists became inevitable. Erasmus surveyed the ground, chose his sun and wind, and took up a position which gave him the greatest attainable advantage against Luther. He posed as the defender—the temperate and reverent defender—of man's free will and erect individualism against what he maintained to be Luther's too dogmatic and absolute assertion of the Divine sovereignty.

Kings, princes, humanists, Pope Clement, Emperor Charles, looked with eager interest on the conflict.

As fate would have it, before taking up Erasmus's world-famous treatise, I had laid down a tract by Münzer. The savage and crabbed sentences of the arch-fanatic—like the snarl of a hyæna—all the more savage and crabbed because of the old, harsh German in which the thing is written, were still in my mind. And here came such a stream of golden and melodious speech as Carlyle had before him when, looking on a page of Macaulay's History, he said, "Flow on, thou shining river!" Never did modern Latin lend itself to the hand of a master more consummate than Erasmus.

With the dignified grace and ease of an accomplished gentleman, and the persuasiveness of a magician of rhetoric, whose spell steals over you ere you are aware, he begins by dwelling on the circumstance that Luther has set himself up against the Universal Church. But Erasmus was by no means so illogical as to make this, though strong as a presumption, serve for a proof. The mystical immensity of force which Dr. Newman, whose temperament is the imaginative-emotional, concedes to the argument from general consent, could not impose upon an intellect like that of Erasmus. In point of fact—as, in these scientific times, we can have no great difficulty in remembering—it is the regular and, in some sense, necessary arrangement, that *every* great change in faith, in science, in art, should be introduced by one man. Nay, more, it seems to be an

infallible symptom of national decay—absolutely the death-mark on the face—when a nation loses the power of believing that the new, represented by *one* man, can transcend the old, represented by many. In science, if you are to go forward, you must believe in Newton against all preceding astronomers. The old has, however, in every instance, the amplest right to be calmly and courteously heard by the new. Erasmus was no such fantastic reasoner as to hold that because Luther told them they were all in error and had long been, Luther was wrong; but he spoke unanswerably when he urged that Luther, appealing against the judgment of centuries, ought to have some forbearance with his opponents, and not demean himself as if all who differed with him were sceptical in religion and at enmity with God.

For the rest, Erasmus assailed what has always been at once the offence and the strength of the Evangelical system. What had startled Duke George when he heard it from Luther's lips in the pulpit, what had bewildered the simple monks of Juterbog, what had encouraged Eck to tell Luther and Carlstadt that they turned men into stones—in one word, the complete spiritual impotence of man, the exclusive action of Divine grace in the salvation of the soul—this it was that Erasmus called in question. Luther, grand always in his intrepid openness, not condescending to imitate Minerva in making her shield a mask, owned that Erasmus had taken fair ground. Man is nothing; God is all; refute that, and you refute the Gospel. So said Luther always.

And against this, not in the tone of a scoffer, not in the tone of one who has for a moment doubted the existence of God or the authority of Holy Writ, but in the spirit and tone of one who will not be driven from the fastness of human personality, and who cannot be brought to admit that a sentient, reasoning creature, whom God has made, can be absolutely paralysed in will and yet justly punished for wickedness, Erasmus urges and insinuates, in meanderings of golden phrase, that Luther's iron dogma cannot be *the whole* of God's truth. With a dexterity too finely strong to be hot or furious, he states with pungent lucidity some of those consequences of the Augustinian and Lutheran dogma from which natural reason has always staggered back appalled. God being the source, and the dynamic basis, of existence, the created universe in all its parts, in all its qualities, is essentially dependent on Him. There is a final sense, therefore, in which sin, in man and in devil, owes its existence to God; and Erasmus quotes a terrific sentence from Augustine to the effect that in the joy of the saved God may be said to reward His own good, and in the pains of the lost to punish His own sin.

But Erasmus is too erudite and wary a theologian to be thrown, in recoil from this astounding paradox, into the anti-Augustinian extreme, to wit, the branded heresy of Pelagianism. He refuses to petrify man, but he will not admit that he fails to exalt God. "My voice is with those who attribute something to free will, but superlatively much to grace." "*Non nihil,*

not nothing;" this is what he asks for man's personality: "*plurimum*, much as much can be;" this is what he leaves for God. It is substantially the position taken up by Locke in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. And why, Erasmus supposes the reader to ask, should anything be left for free will? In order, he replies, that those who voluntarily forsake God may be intelligently and justly taxed with impiety. In order that no plausibly calumnious charge of cruelty and injustice may sully the name of God. In order that despair on the one hand and security on the other may gain no advantage over us. In order that we may be incited to do our best. He argues that the lovely apostolic exhortations to virtue would be mockery if all spiritual good depends on "mere inevitable necessity." Still, when he has most convincingly expatiated on the fatal results of obliterating free will he always harks back on the life-giving breath of God. All, all is ineffectual "without the perpetual grace of God."

Of the argument of Erasmus some idea may be formed from what has been said—and more is not needed for our purpose. In his peroration he tries to leave matters in as smooth a face as possible. If what he has advanced be true, nothing, he urges, will perish that Luther has piously and Christianly said. On the duty of casting away confidence in our own merits, works, or strength, on the duty of transferring all our trust to God and His promises, Luther, he admits, has written wisely and well. But the reader will, he says, consider whether the balanced and modulated

truth, as set forth in the preceding treatise, ought to be relinquished in favour of that paradoxical extreme of Luther's doctrine, "about which the whole Christian world is now being tumultuated." Last of all comes a pathetic word, reminding us how often the charge of being a time-server had been brought against the writer, and how keenly sensitive he was to the reproach. He will, he says, be told that he wants to patch up an accommodation between Christ and human nature. He will be reminded that no one understands this matter who has not the Spirit of God. Well, well. If he has not yet known Christ, he is far astray; he is not unwilling to learn; but he would ask, with respectful humility, what spirit the doctors and bishops of the Church, for thirteen hundred years, have been of.

Luther undertook his reply to Erasmus soon after his marriage—among the delights of his honeymoon, slily remarked the latter. He had got Katie seated beside him. The gracious mystery of a new life linked to his—another dearer self, doubling the worth of existence for him—had exercised a benign influence on his temper and habitudes. His work on the bondage of the will shows him in his best form—his strength massive and concentrated, his temper profoundly moved but not irritated or fierce. In addressing the sovereign of European letters he manifests none of that scornful rudeness with which he had, so to speak, cuffed and kicked the amateur theologian, Henry King of England. He owns the superiority of Erasmus in the gifts of expression, but places his own trust in the

teaching of the Spirit and in the clear sense of Scripture. Of course he dwells on the ingenious carefulness of Erasmus to avoid decisive utterance, attempting always to shade down his Yes until it is almost a No, and to burnish up his No until it might almost pass for a Yes. Erasmus is a Proteus. He is an eel. He tries to walk on eggs without breaking them. He advances on argumentative lines until the conclusion is in sight, and then sidles off without reaching it. In all this Luther insists on detecting the furtive glance of the sceptic. "*Kyket doch der Scepticus hervor.*" But "the Holy Ghost is no sceptic." The Christian must say Yes or No. For his own part, he does not write under the influence of any doubt. His belief on the matter in dispute is as firm as his belief that two and three make five.

There are indeed mysteries in the Bible. But Christ, he says, stands forth as its main subject, robed, not in mystery, but in clearness. The substance of the Gospel is manifest—no obscurity about it; although those who do not look may fail to see it; as a brook may evidently run through the market-place, though some, lurking in the town vennels and alleys, do not see it. Without the Holy Ghost even the simplest truth in Scripture is unintelligible.

He maintains that God *alone* works what is spiritually good in man. "All we do and all that takes place, though it may seem to happen by chance and mutably, still happens necessarily, and cannot otherwise be if you give due consideration to God's will." Even

the ancients, he says, by their doctrine of fate, bore testimony to this fundamental truth. *Certa stant omnia lege*, all things are steadfast by eternal law, says Virgil.

Such, too, is the teaching of Holy Writ; and what he finds in the Bible he (Luther) will proclaim upon the housetops. "No man can come to Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him." "Whom He will He hardeneth." "Why doth He yet find fault?" Luther owns that here there is indeed a mystery; but he leaves it where St. Paul leaves it. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" It is an insoluble problem; it is the "secret of the Divine Majesty." Does Erasmus ask, Who, then, can believe that God loves him? "No man," Luther boldly answers, "unless God by grace convinces him that he is accepted." It is God's method to act by contraries. When He will make us alive He kills us. When He will raise us to heaven He thrusts us down to hell. When He will purify and exalt us to holiness He awakens our conscience and shows us the hideousness of our sin.

Luther avows himself perfectly aware that natural reason rebels against all this. What of that? It is the grand touchstone of faith that it believes when reason stands dumb and astonished. Faith believes that God is infinitely good though few may be saved; that God is infinitely just though He wills that some shall be damned. "What were the use of faith if reason could solve all mysteries?" He well knew, he says, the difficulty of implicit acceptance of the Divine

will. For long years he had been agonised by the fiercest temptations on these matters. It was on this mystery of the Divine character that he had suffered the intensest anguish of doubt and of perplexity. He speaks of the greatest temptations being those which relate to the first table of the law, and turn essentially on the question whether it is a good spirit or a bad spirit that is supreme in the universe. But he had learned to refer the insoluble mystery to "the secret council in heaven and the Divine Majesty." On the practical question of how man is saved every shadow of doubt had left his mind. First, and last, in beginning, middle, and end, salvation was of God.

It need not be said to anyone in the slightest degree acquainted with the contents of Scripture that both Luther and Erasmus could quote passages in support of their respective contentions. Erasmus could point to the many and glorious words—with which, as with star work and jewelled flowers, the temple of Holy Writ is festooned—expressive of God's willingness to be gracious, of His positive negation of willingness that the sinner should die. He could point to the sentence which refutes eternally all pessimism, all despair—"God is love." The gentle scholar, leaguing himself with such kindred spirits, men of heart rather than of logical brain, as Jerome and Origen, would fain have it that those sublime utterances should be the canons of Scriptural interpretation, all passages of narrower import being overarched by their Divine spaciousness, as the infinite blue encloses the planetary systems. Luther,

whose inexorable principle it was to accept Scripture, the whole Scripture, and nothing but Scripture—without glosses, without feats of harmonising ingenuity—put no veil upon those high lights of the Biblical picture. Simply and unfeignedly he expressed his belief in them all. But neither would he permit any veil to be hung before such passages as those in which God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart; to have loved Jacob and hated Esau before the children had done good or evil; to have made some vessels of human clay unto honour and some unto shame. Luther did not profess himself able to reconcile the latter passages with the former. He believed both. He trusted God. Therein was, for him, the office and the test of faith.

Luther ends with a passage of great nobleness, unstained by one coarse word, by one ungenerous, heartless, or intolerant expression. He will now, he says, conclude, hoping that he may more fully treat the subject on another occasion, but feeling that, for a Christian soul, open to the truth, what he has said is enough. If all takes place according to God's will, which even unassisted reason owns, then reason must further grant that there can be no free will, in men, angels, or any created thing. The fall of Adam, the incurable tendency of the Jews to lapse from God, the inability of the heathen nations to attain to virtue and to heaven, prove that without grace man is impotent for good, potent only for evil. Last of all, were man not dead in sin there would be no supreme necessity for a crucified Christ to save him.

In no tone of arrogance or insolence, but as one who feels that he is speaking for God, he entreats Erasmus to accept his instruction, never minding the speaker. He acknowledges that Erasmus is a "dear, high man, graced with many dear, noble, costly gifts by God." He praises the learning, the experience, the understanding, the eloquence of his opponent. For himself he can claim none of these gifts; he is nothing; but he earnestly believes that he is a Christian. He specially commends Erasmus for one thing—that he has gone to the heart of the matter, not engaging him in indecisive strife about "Papacy, Purgatory, Indulgence, and the like." Erasmus, and Erasmus alone in this controversy, has fought on essentials, and taken his antagonist by the throat. "For this I heartily thank you."

If Erasmus cannot agree with him, he expresses the wish that he may devote himself to those Greek and Latin studies in which he has already performed such noble service, and by which he has laid Luther personally under obligations. In those provinces he recognises Erasmus as worthy of all honour; and will earnestly pray that God may make him as superior to him (Luther) in grace as he already is in all other respects. "It is not so new a thing that God should teach Moses by a Jethro, or Paul by an Ananias."

Luther wrote his celebrated reply to Erasmus in Latin, but his friend Jonas, working under his own eye at Wittenberg, translated it into German; and the German, though it is less idiomatic, pithy, and picturesquely vivid than it would have been if he had

written in German to begin with, is entirely to be depended on for his meaning.

It is a just remark of Mr. John Morley's that when generations are earnestly religious they do not seek to minimise their degree of subjection to the Divine Being. Their mood rather is that they cannot have enough of God. So it was in the sixteenth century. With passionate and enthusiastic completeness men gave themselves up to God, eager to divest themselves as much as possible of human personality, to have no will but God's will, to be filled with God as dewdrops in the morning are filled with light. In the debate we have been contemplating, people of academic culture, of speculative disengagement and serene intellectual indifference, voted with Erasmus. The moderates throughout Europe, the fine gentlemen of courts, the semi-sceptical intelligences of universities, told the golden-mouthed apostle of compromise that he was in the right, and hoped that he had put down the paradoxical fanatic. But the heart of the world beat with Luther. The wave of spiritual revolution, gathering volume and impetus, rolled on, leaving Erasmus and his fine intelligences stranded; and ever, from the loftiest crest of the surge, rang out the voice of nations, ascribing glory to God and proclaiming the nothingness of man.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BORES.

It was not always with adversaries of the type and calibre of Erasmus that Luther found himself called upon to contend. When we look into his study, we perceive that the ferment of the time had for him one result peculiarly afflictive—the intrusion of bores.

Didactic, homiletical, speculative, mendicant—their name was legion. In a letter to the Christians of Antwerp, written about the time when he was dealing with Erasmus,* he enables us to form an idea of what he suffered from the uproar of divergent sects and opinions that filled the air. As many views and fancies were being put forward as there were heads to get bewildered or tongues to wag. "No booby is now so abject but that if he dreams or fancies anything, he must impute it to the Holy Ghost, and give himself out for a prophet." And they all made for Luther—him every fool thought himself able to instruct and entitled to judge. He speaks of one of this kidney who came announcing that he had been expressly sent by the Maker of heaven and earth. "He reeled off his jargon floridly yet not

* De Wette, 763.

without boorish coarseness." His special command from God was to order the doctor to read to him the books of Moses. Luther, good soul, asked the intruder what credentials he had of his mission. He gave a general reference to the Gospel of St. John. That was sufficient. "I now felt that I had had enough of my gentleman, and told him to come again, as there was not time enough at present to read the books of Moses." Thereupon the heavenly messenger took himself off, talking distractedly about God the Father having shed His blood to bring us to His Son.

Another bore, more pretentiously speculative, had betaken himself from Antwerp to Wittenberg, and was now about to return from Wittenberg to Antwerp. Luther warns his Antwerp friends to be on their guard against him. This one was clearly no fool in the common sense, and some of his ideas might strike the present generation as less extravagant than they appeared to Luther. He held "that every man possesses the Holy Ghost;" that the Holy Ghost is in fact "the reason and understanding of man;" and that every man has faith. But his view of the nature of faith, though it will startle no one now, was startling then. He held it to be nothing more than the adoption, as creed and maxim, of the principle that we ought to do to our neighbour as we would have our neighbour do to us. He confined perdition exclusively to the flesh, thus, in Luther's opinion, denying the existence of hell. It is noteworthy that Luther expresses no particular horror at these ideas, merely pronouncing them frivolous and

whimsical, and warning the Christians of Antwerp against being tempted to waste time in discussing the like. He advises the Antwerpians to look askance on all tenets that are put forward as new and singular, and to keep their attention upon such as bear on the salvation of the soul. That there should be division of spirits and strife of tongues ought not, he says, to be an offence to those upon whom the light of the Gospel had lately shined. Under the dominance of the Papacy there had been peace in the house, the peace of spiritual slumber, the peace of calm possession by the enemy of Christ's Gospel; but now that the stronger man had entered and was turning the enemy out, there was tumult, contention, confusion. This was Luther's way of stating what four centuries of Protestant wide-awakeness have shown to be a fact of universal experience alike in politics, philosophy, and religion, that the Liberal party is the party of divergent and many-coloured opinions, and that reformation is not promotive of sleep.

It is interesting to mark, in this early encounter between an Evangelical and a Broad Churchman—decidedly broad—a few of those traits and circumstances with which, in the thousand-and-one instances in which representatives of those sections of Protestant Christendom have crossed swords in more recent times, we have been familiar. Luther complains, as Dean Mansel complained, that he could not bring his speculative extravaganzist, *Rumpel-geist*, to the point. When such propositions as those quoted above were set before

him as his, the *Rumpel-geist* repudiated them. Yet other people were convinced that he held them, and he himself, when you got into free and easy talk with him, betrayed that he did so. Evangelicals now address Broad Churchmen in terms of elaborate politeness: Luther's words were rugged as the stones on a newly macadamised road; but, in the gist of his description of this advanced thinker as "a shifty, evasive, *lügenhaftiger* creature, flippant and without modesty, who in the same breath can say a thing and deny that he has said it, and whom it is impossible to keep to any one point," many Evangelicals of to-day would recognise a graphic sketch of what they have themselves experienced. And perhaps the Broad Churchman of the sixteenth century would have said, as Broad Churchmen of the nineteenth say, that Evangelicals are not signally blessed with the gift and grace of intellectual sympathy.

But our interest is more seriously engaged when we learn that the question most keenly discussed between Luther and this interviewer from the Netherlands was, fundamentally, that same question of the will and purpose of God in relation to sin, and of the reality and infinitude of God's love, which emerged in the debate between Luther and Erasmus. It is easy to fancy how the alert rationalist, finding it a ticklish business to debate with Martin Luther on such perilous propositions as that the Holy Ghost and human reason are identical, would take refuge in the Scriptural announcements of God's goodwill to men, of His willingness

that all men should be saved, of His own essential nature as Love. One can gather from Luther's own account that the Wittenberg Hercules had been put somewhat on his mettle. The rationalist had striven to pin him to an assertion that "God wills sin." Luther tells his Antwerp friends that they will be assured by the man that he, Luther, had been shut up to this necessity. He denies it; but with important qualifications. His opponent's general attitude and contention are sketched by him in a few graphic sentences, and we may be quite certain that, with some slight allowance for bias in the describer, the description is true to the life. We shall therefore take it along with us, not *verbatim* and *literatim*, but with as near an approach to actual reproduction as seems compatible with instantaneous intelligibility to the non-metaphysical reader.

The Netherlander set his foot down on the simple proposition that God does not will sin—cannot, with or without explanation, be alleged to be the author of moral evil. Luther accepts the general proposition that God does not will sin, but insists that this is not the last word to be said on the matter. Sin exists. This the interviewer did not deny. But it cannot, urges Luther, exist, unless God, in one sense or another, gives it existence. Who compels Him to let it exist? How could He let it exist if He did not will to do so? The interviewer had no reply. He threw up his head, as if for more convenient scrutiny of the stars and the immensities, and tried to form an idea how God could, at one and the same time, not will, and yet, by

implication, will sin. The attempt was vain. Throw his head never so far back, he could not pierce the infinitudes of Divine mystery, or understand how these two facts are true. He stood fast to it, however, that there is but one will in God.

Luther accordingly says, in his own rough way, that, if the man affirms in Antwerp that he, Luther, alleges that God wills sin, he will be lying. But it is as plain as Luther's own words can make it that there is a sense in which he did hold that God wills sin. He maintained that God has two wills, the will manifested in Providence and the law, and the will hidden and incomprehensible. "God," he says, "has forbidden sin and wills it not. This will is revealed to us, and it is imperative on us to know it. But how God permits, or wills sin, is not for us to know; He has not revealed it. St. Paul himself would and could not answer: 'Who art thou, O man, that judgest God?'" In one word, Luther believes in a secret and inscrutable will of God, in addition to that will which is blazoned on the face of Scripture, and which forbids sin. He advises the Antwerpians, if this speculative genius comes bothering them about the secret will of God, to put him aside, addressing him to this effect: "Is it too little that God sets before us His revealed will? Why do you make fools of us by trying to get us to pry into matters which it is forbidden and impossible for us to know, and about which you yourself know nothing at all? Leave God to assign the due cause to whatsoever takes place; enough for us to know that He wills no sin. How He

permits or wills sin, let us leave unanswered. A servant shall not know his master's secrets, but only what his master orders him to do; much less shall a creature penetrate and comprehend the secret prerogative of its God."

Herr Köstlin, criticising Luther's view of the two wills of God, in connection with his controversy with Erasmus, points out that he has fallen into some inconsistency. Refusing absolutely to listen to reason if it demurs to any textual utterance of Scripture, he nevertheless, Herr Köstlin submits, owes to reason the suggestion of his own theory, for he quotes no Bible verse to prove that there is a hidden as well as a revealed will of God. But Luther might have given reference not to any one verse or chapter, but to Scripture *passim*. It is one of the commonplaces of the Bible that the thoughts of God are unsearchable; and to say that St. Paul, when he states the problem of Divine justice, and bids man be silent in confessed inability to solve it, adds no specific announcement that there is a hidden will of God, is really no more than to say that St. Paul eschews tautology.

As a matter of practical fact, the principle on which Luther insists must form part of every possible ethical scheme, unless it denies the existence of evil, or in thorough-going pessimism calls evil good and good evil. Even the atheist, acknowledging only the physical universe, must admit that there is a mysterious residuum of distress and desolation, of pain and anguish, which remains unexplained and inexplicable in the system

of things. If this mysterious remnant—this core of solid and irreducible blackness—is a valid impeachment of the All, then that sentiment of wondering reverence in the contemplation of the universe which seems to be the ultimate form of atheistic religion is precluded. Under any possible or conceivable scheme of theistic religion, the facts of sin and sorrow must be admitted to coexist with God. To say that He is and that these are, is to say that He permits them ; and it is surely braver and honester to say this right out, as Luther does, than to throw back our heads, stare into the sky, talk of immensities, eternities, Divine silences, and refuse to admit what is self-evident. Shakespeare—whose colossal common sense was akin to Luther's, and whose curiously exact and profound apprehension of Luther's doctrine of grace suggests to me that he may have had access to Lutheran materials which his critics have not traced—Shakespeare, I say, has this line—

> "God does with us as we with children do."

That is what Luther meant. The wise, kind parent gives clear and precise instructions to his children as to their duty ; but he does not necessarily explain to them the motives of his commands.

# Book XIV.

## POPE CLEMENT AND POPE LUTHER.

1524—1534.

# Book XIV.

## POPE CLEMENT AND POPE LUTHER.

### CHAPTER I.

ON THE STAGE OF HISTORY—BATTLE OF PAVIA—SACK OF ROME—FIRST DIET OF SPIRES.

Luther's work had now taken its place among those influences which are reckoned with by princes; and, in order to its intelligent apprehension, we must understand its relation to the general procession of events in the sixteenth century.

Among the personages by whom, in that age, history, in the sense of battles, sieges, and treaties, was made, two stand prominently forward—Francis I. of France, and Charles V. of Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Indies. These two engaged in life-long rivalry and conflict. Among those who looked with keenly interested eyes upon their contendings two figures were conspicuous—Henry VIII. of England and Clement VII. of Rome—who leant alternately to the one or to the other, in accordance with the views they respectively entertained as to the comparative advantages to be obtained by themselves. But the part played by Henry, though of primary importance to English

historians, and not without considerable value as a factor in Continental affairs, was for our present purpose of much less consequence than that of the remarkable man, head of the great house of Medici, who, having been potent among the cardinals of fine gentleman Leo, and having placed the tiara on the head of innocent Adrian, now essayed to discharge the office of Christ's Vicegerent in conjunction with that of temporal sovereign of the Roman States. If one were forced to adopt a single epithet by way of designating Clement, one might call him, *par excellence*, the Macchiavellian Pope. The essence of Macchiavellianism, as distilled in the *Prince*, consists in three things: the possession of noble or at least respectable aims, the furtherance of these by any means, foul or fair, and—here is the final *differentia* —the application of the evil means, if evil means are alone available, with all the skill, energy, courage, and wisdom which the best and ablest men display in applying right means to right ends. The noble element in Clement's policy was his wish to neutralise, as much as possible, that influence of foreign Powers upon Italy which, in the chronic agony naturally arising from political home rule, afflicted her. To this we add, as also a legitimate motive, his regard for the success of the Papacy. The sinister means by which he promoted these ends were fraud and falsehood; and Macchiavelli himself could not have complained of laxity or silliness in Clement's execution.

In the autumn of 1524 the King of France, after bringing to a brilliant finish his warlike businesses on

his own side of the Alps, insisted, against the advice of his sagest counsellors and the remonstrance of his politic mother, Louise of Savoy, upon carrying the war into Italy. Accordingly, the French army came glittering down the Alpine slopes by Mont Cenis, when the trees were shedding their leaves, and formed the siege of Pavia, a town on the Ticino. Pescara and Lannoy, the skilful generals who commanded the Imperial army in Italy—Charles himself was in Spain —deemed their force too inconsiderable to engage the splendid French army headed by its dashing king; but they threw into Pavia, which occupied a strong position on the river and was additionally protected by fortifications, a garrison of 6,000 veteran soldiers, under the resolute and capable leadership of Antonio de Leyva. During the winter months the siege went forward with varying fortune; but to all ordinary observation it seemed clear that the issue could be none other than the victorious entrance of Francis into the town. In that event, he would be the foremost man in Italy and in the world.

Clement had hitherto courted Charles under the impression that he was manifestly the Lord Paramount of Italy. Between Pope and Emperor, at the time when Francis advanced into Italy, there had been league and friendship. But this vicegerent of Christ was no man to omit the worship of the rising sun. He made advances to the monarch before whose presence the commanders of Charles had fallen back, and who seemed destined, in a few weeks, to be captor of Pavia. His

idea was that if he could induce the Emperor to cede a considerable territory to Francis, his own gain would be decisive. The rivals, to begin with, would balance and check each other in Italy. The Pope, in the second place, might persuade them to unite in alliance, himself being the clasp between them, with a view to put down, *more majorum*, the pestilent heretics of Germany. It was a clever scheme enough, but Charles thwarted it. Clement's diplomacy he treated as mere treachery. Thus repelled, the Pope concluded a treaty of neutrality with Francis, and was classed by Charles as among his antagonists.

When the first pale sunbeams of 1525, therefore, touched the peaks of the Alps, Francis naturally thought himself the darling of fortune, and believed that no enterprise was too hard for his puissance. The pasquinaders of Rome assured the world, in phrases witty, that Pescara and Lannoy, Charles's generals, had, with their army, lost themselves among the north Italian hills. Francis doubtless enjoyed the joke, and manifested his scorn for the Spaniards by resolving, even while the siege of Pavia was on his hands, to stretch out his sword across Italy and pierce into the Neapolitan domains of his rival. On this mission marched John Stuart, Duke of Albany, with 6,000 men. They marched without resistance from Charles's commanders —a signal proof, we may be sure, in the eyes of the brilliant Roman pasquinaders, that Lannoy and Pescara were indeed as helpless as babes lost in a wood.

Meanwhile, unobserved by Francis, "clouded with

his own conceit," but presumably in communication with the babes in the wood, there approached the French camp a formidable body of armed men. The Imperialists, under Lannoy and Pescara, then assumed the offensive, and on the twenty-fourth of February fought the great battle of Pavia. Francis performed prodigies of valour, and his army, with the exception of a body of Swiss, fought bravely, but his defeat was complete and tremendous. Ten thousand fell, including many persons of high rank. Francis was made prisoner.

Here, then, was a *bouleversement*—a topsy-turvying of all plans and calculations. Charles himself appears to have been "astonied for one hour"—and to have felt the grandeur of his position to be overpowering. Thus, at all events, may be interpreted the elaborate show of moderation with which he received the tidings. "Without uttering one word expressive of exultation, or of intemperate joy, he retired immediately into his chapel, and having spent an hour in offering up his thanksgivings to heaven, returned to the presence-chamber, which by that time was filled with grandees and foreign ambassadors, assembled in order to congratulate him." Amid the storm of compliments his demeanour was loftily meek. He descanted in an edifying manner on the instability of greatness, expressed sympathy for his royal prisoner, and forbade public rejoicings for a victory won by Christians over Christians. But even the indulgent Robertson admits that Charles was in part play-acting, and the sequel proves that the occasion ministered to his ambition and his pride. In short, he

was pausing, and concentrating himself for future efforts.

All the world felt the shock of the battle of Pavia. In England Henry was startled to see Charles tower suddenly into unapproached ascendency. France was filled with consternation and distress; but if Louise of Savoy had the caprice and sentimentality of a brilliant woman she had the ability of an extraordinary man, and helmed her son's affairs in his absence with a stronger arm than his own. It was the Medicean vicegerent of Christ, however, the politic, too clever Clement, who was most sharply taken aback. What should he do? Francis had been struck down, and no man could have a finer appreciation of the rule of avoiding a falling friend like a falling knife than the Macchiavellian Pope. His first impulse was to enter into negotiations with Charles, asking for certain advantages, and advancing money, of which Charles was always in want. Lannoy, complaisant enough until the money was paid and distributed irrecoverably among the troops, now informed Clement that the Emperor would not accept his terms. He fell back, therefore, on the alternative scheme of plotting against Charles, a course which indeed commended itself to him on general grounds, for he extremely dreaded the attainment of complete ascendency by the Emperor in Italy.

And now it would be much to our purpose to follow Clement into the dusky labyrinth of conspiracy and intrigue, for thus we should furnish ourselves with *data* of high importance on which to base our estimate of the

wisdom or unwisdom, the Christian fidelity to righteousness or the unchristian hardness, of Martin Luther when he came to consider projects of conciliation between the Papacy, headed by Clement, and the Reformation centred in Wittenberg. For Luther the Papacy was not a theory but a fact, and we learn what kind of fact it was by becoming acquainted with the practical ethics which, under the auspices of Clement, were in vogue in Italy in 1525. But we are under no necessity of lingering long in a region so haggard and graceless, and one sample of pontifical conspiracy must suffice.

Clement's grand ally in the plot in question was Morone, Chancellor of the Duchy of Milan, a statesman of fourscore, but still clear and keen in all operations of the mind. The object of the confederates was to induce Pescara to turn traitor, and to aim the deadliest blows at the Imperial cause while still figuring in the world's eye as its armed defender. Morone artfully represented to Pescara that Charles had treated the latter with ingratitude, and enlarged on the splendid reward that would be his if the Imperial power in Italy were broken. The infantry of Spain, invincible in the field, might, suggested Morone, be gradually but effectually got rid of if they were posted by Pescara in small detachments in the villages, to be cut off in detail by the peasantry. Pescara listened to these proposals, but declined to return an immediate answer, having some doubts as to the safety of such proceedings, from a religious point of view, even under sanction of the Pope. Morone and Clement succeeded, however, in

removing his scruples, and he announced his willingness to be their instrument.

Some little time had been indispensable for bringing matters to this point, and it was arranged that a final interview should take place between Pescara and Morone at Novara, in order to bring the treaty to a conclusion. Pescara received the Italian in a tapestried chamber, and they went once again over all the essential parts of the grave and delicate undertaking. At length Morone rose to take leave. One can imagine the smile of lofty satisfaction mantling over his venerable countenance as he reflected on the skill with which he had succeeded in beguiling the famous soldier. Then the folds of the tapestry opened, and disclosed the form of Antonio de Leyva, Charles's Governor of Pavia. Placed behind the arras, he had heard the whole conversation, and now arrested Morone in the Emperor's name.

No sooner had Pescara got the threads of the conspiracy fairly in hand than he laid the matter before the Emperor, and received his instructions as to how he should proceed. He had been told to carry on the intrigue until a favourable moment arrived for entrapping Morone. The vicar of Christ, therefore, was again badly checkmated.

Warned by the Morone plot, as well as other circumstances too many for mention, of the formidable dangers by which he was encompassed, the Emperor, before releasing his royal prisoner, not only imposed hard conditions on Francis, but bound him by the most solemn oaths to observe them. The treaty of Madrid

was concluded between captor and captive, and in March, 1526, Francis was once more in his own dominions. Indomitable, vigilant, and energetic, Pope Clement took heart of grace at this turn of affairs. Before the end of May he had organised another league having for its object to depress the power of Charles. By a treaty signed at Cognac the members pledged themselves to stand by each other. It was called the Holy Alliance, as many have since been, respecting which the rule of *lucus a non lucendo* may be said to have been followed in the choice of an epithet. In this instance the name was perhaps more directly due to the part of prime importance played in its councils by his Holiness the Pope. As lord of the consciences of men, Clement absolved Francis from his oaths and subscriptions to the treaty of Madrid. This fact stands indelible on the historic page, and it is but one of many such recorded of the Macchiavellian Pontiff. To this point had the mixing-up of temporal and spiritual authority brought the Papacy in 1526. We are to remember the fact when we deplore Luther's narrowness in calling the Pope Antichrist.

Francis did not prove an efficient ally. He was hampered by the circumstance that his sons remained as hostages in the Emperor's hands. The confederates found, moreover, that the Italian art of diplomatic lying did not promote cohesion, harmony, and force in their operations. A great Imperialist army of Spaniards, Germans, Swiss, and Italians advanced into Italy and marched for Rome. On the sixth of May the city was

taken by storm. An army of rude and furious soldiers, intent on plunder, poured into the city. The scene of pillage and devastation that followed was appalling. Churches, palaces, convents, monuments of antiquity, were involved in a common ruin. Though no great number fell in the assault, yet, first and last, a large number of all ages and both sexes were slain. Robertson avers that Rome, though taken and sacked by Huns, Vandals, and Goths, never suffered so severely as when given over for a prey to the army of Charles. "Never," according to Ranke, "did a richer booty fall into the hands of a more violent host. Never was there a more protracted, persistent, destructive plundering." Luther heard of these things with awe-struck amazement at the judgments of God. "Rome," he said, "has been miserably laid waste; Christ ordaining that the Kaiser who, in behalf of the Pope, was to have struck down Luther, should in behalf of Luther strike down the Pope." Clement remained Charles's captive.

While Pope and Emperor had been bedewing the Italian fields and the battlements and streets of Rome with blood, in their fierce conflict of physical force and godless machinations, the work of reform was going on apace in Germany. John of Saxony, Philip of Hesse, and the high-minded princes, nobles, and congregations that took part with them, pushed steadily forward the two-fold enterprise of restoring primitive Christianity on the model of the New Testament, and of making room for it as a recognised and legalised form of Divine worship in Germany.

In the first part of this operation Luther was the guiding and governing spirit. The princes listened to him, deferred to him, obeyed him with deliberate recognition of his call from God to reform the Church; and he desired no more conspicuous or shining tasks (nor could any tasks be found more congenial to his spirit) than those of preaching the Gospel, fitting the truth to words of catechetical instruction so simple that every child could understand them, helping congregations to find pastors and arrange their affairs, and, above all, translating the Scriptures.

In what we may somewhat vaguely define as the international parts of the twofold enterprise, Luther took much less interest. But the princes, to their credit, were vigilant and energetic in their public championship of the Gospel cause; and they deftly availed themselves of the opportunity presented by the furious strife between Charles and Clement to obtain for the Reformed Church a place among German institutions. At length, in the Diet of Spires, on the 27th of August, 1526, they succeeded in practically attaining their object. The Edict of Worms, which had so long hung as a fiery portent and menace of coming wrath in the political firmament of Germany, was not swept finally from the heavens, but it was veiled in softening clouds of compromise and reservation. Comprehensive and final adjustment of the matters in dispute was referred to a General Council. In the meantime—this was the new and the vital point—all concerned were to interpret and apply the Worms Edict in such manner as

they deemed most consistent with due consideration for the authority of God and the majesty of the Kaiser. Decorously but effectively the famous instrument was thus set aside. The proceeding looked like a mere ceremonial entombment, but it proved almost equivalent to a real burial.

## CHAPTER II.

LUTHER AT HOME—KATIE'S GUARDIANSHIP—DOGMATIC PETRIFACTION—CORRESPONDENCE—LETTER TO MARY QUEEN OF HUNGARY.

While the holy city of the Papacy is being sacked by Christians; while Clement rushes panic-stricken from vain prayers in the church of St. Peter to take refuge in the fort of St. Angelo; while German soldiers, throwing into the tragic uproar some rude touch of comic humour, parade the streets in the garb of cardinals, and shout, in the church just quitted by Clement, "Long live Pope Luther!" we shall turn from the Tiber to the Elbe, and see how it fares in the convent dwelling of him who presented at that hour the most accurate counterpart afforded by Christendom to those popes of early Rome who took precedence of their brother bishops by virtue of that natural Divine right which assigns the task and the honour of leading to those who are pre-eminently men of light.

Our Evangelical pontiff is in a thriving condition. Katie mounts guard over him with civilising potency, endeavouring, for one thing, to develop in him that trait of civilised men—a sense of property. Her notion

is fixed that when nice things—shapely and sightly cups or vases, for example—are given to her husband, they ought to remain to ornament their modest quarters, and not be handed, according to Martin's wont, to the first man who showed vehement admiration for them. Luther announces to a correspondent, in the beginning of a letter of May, 1526,* that he is sending, by the messenger who is to take the letter, one of the aforesaid articles to his friend; but lo! before finishing, he is forced to confess that the *insidiatrix Ketha*, his cunning preceptress in political economy, had got wind of his intention, and, *cum peterem, transtulerat illud*, when he looked for it, she had put it out of sight. He made a noise, but everybody was in Katie's plot; and her state of health exacted tender treatment. Wait till her health improves, *donec puerperio liberetur*, and she brings the article again to light; then will he seize it and send it off. I have not heard that this occasion presented itself. *Insidiatrix Ketha!*

Martin, though he could make some show of storming, felt in his heart that Katie was on these points right. He tells Nicholas Hausmann, for example, with evident satisfaction, that the glass which Hausmann, having adorned it with his own hand, had given to Luther as a keepsake, would have been "extorted" from him had not she stuck to it "tooth and nail." The inestimable feminine quality of thrift, whose preciousness in the pastor's household he had not failed to accentuate when it came before him in connection

* De Wette, 297.

with the cruel wickedness of clerical celibacy, he had now opportunity of personally experiencing.

In due course the delicacy of health which had bespoken extra tenderness for Katie reached the expected climax. On the 7th of June, 1526, about a year after the marriage, she was delivered of a son. In the whole matter of his marriage Luther had been influenced by constant mental reference to his father, and he named his first-born John. We have a letter from Martin of the following day, in which he piously records the occurrence—piously but briefly, for he must break off suddenly, as the sick wife is calling him to her bedside. "*Fordert mich die kranke Käthe*—my sick Katie calls me."

A few days afterwards he writes to Spalatin, who has been sending congratulations. The calm, deep joy of which, every day since the birth of his son, he has been becoming more conscious, now overflows in glowing words. He describes himself as a glad husband on whom the best and most charming of wives has bestowed a little son, a Johnny Luther. With the blessing and wonderful grace of God, he accepts, he says, the solemn trust involved in becoming a father. He pleads for a visit. Will not Spalatin come and have a look at the memorials of their old familiarity and friendship? Things old and things new are to be seen. In this year of happy omens—so strongly contrasted with the year of Peasant War and heartrending agitation that preceded it—Luther has learned to occupy himself with labours which physic the pain of mental weariness. "I

have planted," he says, "a garden. I have built a fountain." Fit achievements for a primitive Bishop and Papa, who has called back Christendom to the simplicities of home religion. "Come," he concludes, with a true touch of lyric poetry, "and you will be crowned with lilies and roses." *

It is a significant note of this year of bettering that he gave himself and the Papists a "respite," as Seckendorf † calls it. We find also, with lively pleasure, that he is once more on friendly terms with Carlstadt. He and Katie, with Melanchthon and Jonas, stood sponsors for Carlstadt's son, and made merry with him on the occasion at his farm in the vicinity of Wittenberg. It was by Luther's special entreaty, acceded to with very great difficulty, and against the influence of the entire Court, that the Elector had been induced to let Carlstadt return to the district. ‡

But his theological dogmatism does not abate. He presents a face of relentless antipathy to all who accept any modification of his doctrine of the Eucharist. When any who desire his friendship avow that, for them, the eating of Christ's flesh in the Supper means only spiritual eating, he tells them with candid sharpness that he can have no fellowship with them. His tone is not acrimonious. It is rather that of affectionate sadness. But it is decisive. "I entreat you, if my wish is of any weight with you, to give up your soul-destroying opinion and cease to propagate pestilence in the Church. If you are given over to your error,

* De Wette, 805. † Quoted by Worsley. ‡ De Wette, 810.

continue to work mischief as far as Christ lets you. But I will hold to the simple sense of the words. Look you to it. I am innocent of your blood, and of the blood of those whom you lead to perdition. Farewell; return to a sane mind, or cease to call us brothers, or to have fellowship with us in any Christian appellation." * Could anything be more sad? He had put his foot down. You might as well reason with Mont Blanc.

It cost him more effort to be coldly steadfast against those who took the spiritual view of the sacrament than to stand firm against the Pope. He was constrained to admit that some of the Zwinglians were good men. Œcolampadius impressed him with a specially vivid realisation of fine and noble manhood of the Christian type. But even against Œcolampadius, though amazed, he stood firm. "I grieve from my heart for Œcolampadius; such a man taken captive by frivolities and argumentative nonentities, and led away into that sacrilegious sect!" † In this same letter, preceding not inappropriately his woe-begone reference to the apostasy of Œcolampadius, there are words of misgiving as to the general course of Divine Providence. "Christ," says Luther to Hausmann, "begins to weary of the course of this world; and therefore hands it over to Satan, that vengeance be taken for the ineffable contempt shown to the Gospel of Grace, in one place by raging heresies, in another by the clash of hostile armies and the fall of mighty kings." For his part, he is convinced that the Day of Judgment is "at the door." In

* De Wette, 814. † De Wette, 819.

a somewhat later letter to the same correspondent he recurs to this last idea of war and uproar heralding the crack of doom. "Such a fervour, such an ardour, such a movement, such a falling, such a rushing, such a raging," fill, he says, the air, "that only the advent of the great God can quell the tumult." *

All this has a deep significance for the purposes of our biography. It means that Luther's work, in its essentials as an original contribution to the intellectual and moral progress of mankind, was well-nigh done. Prometheus snatches no second fire-germ from the celestial altars. One man does but one man's life-work, be it an average man's or a hero's, a dwarf's or a giant's. Few among those whose names are "full-welling fountain-heads of change" have done so much to impel the race onward as Luther; yet are there few, if any, of the great men of history, in whose case the limitations of the work done, and of the capacity to do it, are more distinctly marked. One cannot help being struck, moreover, with the suddenness of the end. The crystallising process took place quickly. In the Wartburg, in the beginning of 1521, his moral nature was comparable to a molten mass, capable apparently of much flowing and changing; in the autumn of 1526—the period of these letters—the crystallisation had occurred, and the lately fluent mass presented a surface of adamant.

It is not easy to treat of this stage in Luther's spiritual history without seeming to fall into incon-

* De Wette, 822.

sistency and contradiction. It affords matter for congratulation; it affords matter for tears. Nothing can be surer than that the promise of the Reformation might have been wrecked if Luther had not stilled the tumult of the Zwickau prophets, and barred the gateways of civilisation against the flaming insanities of Münzer. But those terrible conflicts cost him dear. He had struggled with spectres and overcome; but the shock had told with paralysing efficacy upon his own powers of hope, enthusiasm, and original thought. The distress occasioned him by severance from those with whom he had first undertaken the enterprise of reform was heart-breaking—had it not been for Katie and the sacred calm of married love his heart might have been broken. But his faith, though terribly tried, stood the test. Always, in consoling others, he recurs to what was his own mainstay—the fact that the Apostles had been confronted by false brethren as well as he. We may well wonder, however, that it did not occur to Martin to ask whether there is any New Testament warrant for regarding and treating as a heretic one who believed Christ's presence in the bread and wine of the Supper to be spiritual instead of corporeal. If the Bible must be taken as the basis of Church unity—which is Luther's view—it surely follows that no interpretation of Scripture which *can* be held by a reverent, sane, and candid reader ought to exclude that reader from the fellowship of Christians. Who made one man judge of another man's honesty? If we are ever to have full advantage of what Luther did for us, we shall agree that neither

the view of Christ's presence in the Supper taken by Thomas Aquinas, nor the view taken by Martin Luther, nor the view taken by Ulrich Zwingli, can disentitle any man to the name of Christian brother.

Luther, however, like Elijah and many other men of the prophetic order, was much in the dark as to the scope of the work in which he was engaged, and as to the way in which it was to be utilised for humanity. He stood aghast at the divisive potencies of the Protestantism he had evoked; but those divisive potencies, surging out in a thousand channels, branching out in a thousand directions, have been the life of modern Europe. We revert, therefore, without oppressive despondency, to his operations in that limited yet extensive Pontificate whose central altar was Katie's household fire, Pope Martin sitting by it with the Bible at his elbow and Johnny on his knee, and whose boundary was that vast and widening circle that had now been reached by the illumination of the new Gospel of Grace.

Thus considered, his letter of this autumn of 1526 to Mary Queen of Hungary is not without interest.

Mary, sister of the Emperor Charles, had been given in marriage to Lewis, King of Hungary. There, on the far east of Christendom, where Cross and Crescent were in actual strife, she dared to believe that neither Pope nor Kaiser was so well instructed in the meaning of Christianity as Martin Luther. She exerted herself, against the strenuous opposition of the bishops, in disseminating the Evangelical doctrines in

Hungary. Meanwhile the Crescent came flashing on, the great Solyman invading Hungary with an army estimated at three hundred thousand men. Lewis, indiscreetly brave, attempted to meet the enemy with a force of thirty thousand. Worse still, he put his trust in the confident generalship of Paul Tomorri, Archbishop of Golocza and monk of the Franciscan order, and was hurried by him into the battle of Mohacz, in which himself and upwards of twenty thousand men were slain. Under these circumstances our primitive Pope wrote to the widowed Queen, as a fellow-worker in the Christian vineyard and an afflicted member of his flock. He accompanied the letter with his exposition of four of the Psalms, in which he bids her find consolation, as well as admonition to continue "alert and glad of heart, *frisch und fröhlich*," in the service of the Lord. He encourages her to believe that the calamity which has overtaken her has been sent in grace, not in anger, reminding her of a heavenly Bridegroom, better than he whom she has lost, whose kind angels will hover beside her and take care of her. This of the companionship and tendance of angels is by no means a common train of thought with Martin, but none could be more beautifully appropriate to the present occasion. From the sympathy of angels he rises to a still higher source of consolation, the sympathy of God. No one, he says, can sympathise with sorrow as God can, for God in Christ knows sorrow as no man can know it. Nor is there any disaster on earth that cannot be lightly borne by one who knows that he possesses God's love. On

the other hand, "he who has no sense of this love cannot be truly cheerful, though he swim in a sea of worldly pleasure and delight." *

Surely it was a lovely relationship that subsisted between this Papa and his spiritual children—one that casts a light of revealing sweetness both into the far past explaining the origin, and into the far future betokening the possibilities, of a true Divine-right primacy among Christian brother-bishops. Queen Mary, as she read this letter, which in its home-bred old German comes closer to the heart than can be shown in English, must have felt that God's hand was wiping the tears from her eyes.

* De Wette, 826.

## CHAPTER III.

LUTHER AND ELECTOR JOHN—THE NEW SAXON CHURCH—NATIONAL CHURCHES.

It could not fail to be an immense comfort and furtherance to Luther that there was now no cloud between him and his sovereign Prince. The new Elector, the magnanimous, noble, and valiant John, was animated by a positive enthusiasm for the Gospel such as had never quite realised itself in Frederick. He took it for the purpose of his life to promote the cause of God's truth in his own dominions and throughout Germany, choosing as his heraldic motto and blazon among princes the famous phrase, *Verbum Domini manet in eternum*, the Word of the Lord endureth for ever; which, on signet-ring and battle banner, could be abbreviated into V.D.M.I.E.

The work of reformation, therefore, did not halt. But there were difficulties inherent in the subject with which even Luther, seconded by John, found it hard to cope. We have a letter* from the former to the latter, of November 22nd, 1526, which falls like a beam of direct solar illumination into the general historic dimness of the old Saxon world of the period. To

* De Wette, 828.

transform the parish priests of the Papal *régime* into pastors of the Protestant type involved changes both in themselves and their congregations, implying such *growth* of mind and heart as neither a prince could command, nor a primitive Pope, who disclaimed all power to work miracles, could improvise. A gradual elevation and bettering in spiritual respects—in intelligence, information, general intellectual and moral standing—was necessary to men who depended no longer on their mystical gifts as a priesthood, their power to *perform* worship and *dispense* salvation, but on their effectiveness in preaching the Gospel. This last expression must always, under Protestant institutions, be equivalent, or nearly equivalent, to conducting the spiritual education of the people. But many of the old Popish priests were incapable of exercising any educational influence upon adult humanity. Hence visitation, inquiry, weeding out, proved indispensable, and could not help being, in a considerable proportion of instances, not joyous but grievous.

The congregations gave as much dissatisfaction as the parish priests, or indeed more. The peasants were stiffly refractory in the matter of contributing to the maintenance of their pastors. Naturally so. The rudest peasant understands that if a priest can certify his admittance into heaven for some irreducible *minimum* of coin, the ware is worth the money. Small as each contribution is, yet, when made by a large number, the combined result will be considerable, and the arrangement will work indifferently well both for priest and

people. But it would not be easy to excogitate a plan more exquisitely adapted to keep *down* the level of culture both in people and priest. And the average peasant, who has been accustomed to pay for his salvation as he pays for his pipe and his beer, by minute dribblets of which he does not feel the pinch, will find it sharply irksome to have to pay in larger individual amounts, though at longer intervals, for the ideal and not entirely unquestionable advantage of a weekly, or bi-weekly, or tri-weekly sermon. Luther had to own in plaintive terms to the Elector that the peasants downrightly refused to pay their pastors. Such thankless unconcern for the "holy Word of God" portended, he thought, some great judgment on the land. So dark was his mood on the subject, so ireful as well as melancholy, that, could he but reconcile such a course to his conscience, he would, he says, leave them to their own devices, without priest or pastor, "to live as swine, which in fact they do." The freedom of the Gospel, glorious and pure, they wanted to turn into mere animal exemption from law. The ban of the Papacy being removed, they had neither the fear of God nor regard for morals before their eyes, but did every man as seemed good in his own sight. This state of things might be let alone were it not for the children. But the little ones must have preaching and teaching, church and school. "If the parents are stubbornly wilful they must just go to the devil." But if the children are neglected the country will become full of moral savages, and the authorities will be guilty of

gross neglect of duty both towards God and towards posterity. The duty of the governing part of nations to educate the young is here unflinchingly laid down by Martin Luther.

What, then, is to be done? This is the statesman's question, and Luther answers it with a comprehensive discernment of essentials, and a decisive disregard of non-essentials, attesting once more his practical and organising genius. Waiving the attempt to draw lines of theoretic demarcation between the civil and the spiritual provinces, he points to the fact that in the sudden crash and downfall of the old Popish arrangements a large amount of property, in the shape of conventual and other foundations, has come into the hands of the authorities, that is to say, in the last resort, of the Elector. The duty and the burden (*die Pflicht und Beschwerde*) of directing the use to be made of the property rests with his highness. Luther has discussed the matter with the principal functionaries of the court, and the advice he tenders to the Elector is brief.

A Commission of Visitation shall be appointed, consisting of four persons, to traverse the country and make the necessary dispositions. Two of the four shall attend specially to the temporalities, seeing to it that revenues devoted hitherto to spiritual purposes shall not be diverted to secular uses. The other two shall deal with matters of doctrine and moral character, taking care that pastors and schoolmasters are fit for their offices.

Of the principles and methods in accordance with which the two spiritual commissioners were to determine

the competence of preachers and teachers he does not on this occasion speak. But he glances at the main aspects of the problem of temporalities. First, he takes up the case of those towns and villages which are rich enough to maintain their own churches and schools. These the Elector is to compel to do so. If the inhabitants are heedless of their own salvation, the prince is the guardian of the young and of all who need his help. He is to enforce contributions as frankly as he does those that go to build bridges and mend highways. But there are localities which, either from indigence, or from being otherwise burdened up to the limit of their capability, are unable to support the minister and the schoolmaster. Recourse must in such instances be had to the properties annexed to convents. They were originally, it is to be presumed, intended for the spiritual benefit of the common man, and they are still to be used for that purpose. It is plain that a bitter outcry would be raised, and justifiably raised, if church and school were allowed to fall into decay while the nobles appropriated the conventual properties—as they now propose to do, and have in some cases actually done. If any surplus remains after church and school have been provided for, it will be the duty of the prince to lay it out in the service of the public, or to apply it to the maintenance of the poor.

Could anything be more simple? And yet the few sentences in which Luther offers his counsel on the subject comprise a sketch of the entire process by which the Reformed and National Church of Saxony arose.

With a *minimum* of change from the past, a *minimum* of invention for the present, a *minimum* of novelty and artificiality of any kind, the wise gardener grafts the new branch on the old tree.

Without quite knowing it—working, that is to say, as a half-unconscious instrument of providential evolution—Luther did, in this simple fashion, a very notable thing. Until now there had not been in Christendom what moderns mean by a National Church. Persons who have never breathed the atmosphere of other ages talk with glib assurance of the continuity, the historical unity, of this or that modern Church. These people start from a misconception. Until the Reformation there was no Church of Saxony, no Church of France, no Church of England. As single letters have sometimes denoted profound differences in dogmatic theology, so have profound differences in ecclesiastical position been denoted by words of one syllable. There it is in this instance. During the mediæval time there was the Church *in* Saxony, not the Church *of* Saxony; the Church *in* England, not the Church *of* England. There of course were Christian Churches in those countries, but people never forgot that the term "Church" belonged strictly to the totality of Christian Churches throughout Christendom. The Apostolic usage, as exhibited in many passages of the New Testament, had been maintained, and men continued to think and speak as St. Paul thought and spoke when referring to the Churches in Galatia or the Churches in Judæa. Christianism had not been narrowed into

nationalism; and we do injustice, bitter injustice, to mediæval Christendom and the Latin Church if we refuse to acknowledge this great fact.*

To the large view of the unity of the Christian Church Luther never took exception; but he had absolutely satisfied himself, from Scripture and from history, that by usurpation and corruption the Papacy had forfeited the right, and lost the power, to represent the unity of Christendom. The duty to his hand was not to draft a scheme for the reconstitution of Christendom, but to make the best possible use of the means and appliances available in Saxony for maintaining the ordinances of religion and the moral education of the people. The National Church had become one of the practical necessities of the moment. It never seems to have occurred to Luther to doubt that the organising of such institutions was included within the Christ-given freedom of Christian men and Christian nations. "All things are lawful unto me." But he worked as much as possible on old lines. By successive visitations, by weeding out and humanely pensioning off parish priests of shady character or intellectual incapacity, by encouraging good men, and providing a modest maintenance for all, the Saxon Church was brought into reasonable efficiency. Elector John was of willing mind, but he sometimes fell short in force and firmness, and the importunate energy and sleepless

* Since writing these sentences I have read and carefully considered Lord Selborne's advocacy of a different view in a recent book, but I have not a shadow of doubt that he is mistaken.

vigilance of Luther were requisite to help him to overpower the resistance of worldly, greedy, apathetic courtiers. The circumstances of the case were such that Luther did not feel himself called upon to work out in theory the complex and difficult problem of the relation between Church and State. Entertaining decided opinions as to the strictly Divine jurisdiction of the civil power, he had no scruple in using John's authority in all ecclesiastical arrangements. On the other hand, it seems never to have occurred to him as a thing to be believed by rational men that kings or parliaments were Divinely qualified to determine the meaning of Scripture, or entitled to impose upon congregations a uniform system of worship. It was *his* business as a doctor of theology and a preacher of the Gospel, and that of the spiritual representatives and guides of congregations, to instruct kings in the doctrines of the faith; and with congregations it lay, subject to the laws of decency and order, and distinctly recognising that variety, when reverent and comely, is *preferable* to uniformity, to arrange methods of worship.

Luther's own leanings were to the conservative side in Church matters. In Hesse the Evangelicals were more boldly democratic than in Saxony. Philip, impetuous and thorough-going in all things, had a repugnance to the Episcopal order far keener than Luther's. The V.D.M.I.E. of Elector John's motto he jestingly translated into *Verbum diaboli manet in episcopis*, The word of the devil remains in bishops.

But the essentials of congregational liberty, both with reference to the calling of pastors and the adoption of ceremonies, were very safe in Luther's hands. It is impossible to read his letters on the process by which the Roman Catholic churches in Saxony were transformed into the Protestant Church of Saxony without being reminded of Cromwell's machinery for promoting efficiency and purity in the Commonwealth Church. Cromwell's Courts of Triers might have been modelled, and very probably were modelled, on Luther's Commissions of Visitation. And all parties, even amid the furious rancours of Cromwell's time, admitted that his methods of promoting pastoral efficiency were successful.

The particulars of the organisation of the Saxon Church belong to Saxon history, and must not detain us here. The entire arrangement of National Churches, which followed upon the main lines of the Saxon precedent, has often been called in question. That it has obscured one or two of the fundamental ideas of Christianity—blunting the sense of human and Christian brotherhood, and narrowing the Church of the world into the Church of this or that nation—admits of no dispute. Seldom, in the interminable battle of controversialists, has a more powerful or a more legitimate bolt been hurled than the famous one of Dr. Newman when, in retiring from the Church of England, he pronounced it a mere "national institution." But national institutions may open their windows to receive the cosmopolitan, Christian light. The

modern State-Church was a genuine birth of historical evolution. The time had come for it. The centralised administration of Rome had been a failure. The nations of Christendom wanted Home Rule in spiritual things. The time may now be approaching when National Churches, in their sixteenth-century form, will be outgrown. Christian peoples, taking their Churches out of the arms of those Kings and Queens who have, in some measure, been their nursing fathers and nursing mothers, may bear them up in their own, and, in so doing, may regain, or more than regain, the mediæval idea of a united Christendom. It is unwise either to inveigh against the founders and framers of National Churches, or to claim for their arrangements Divine right, universal fitness, and perennial endurance. They were expedients, suggested by the conditions and requirements of the time, practically inevitable, necessarily imperfect, but naturally evolved and worthy of honour. Compare them with the artificial ecclesiasticisms of which the world has of late had samples,—with the Church of the *Être Suprême*, or the ecclesiastical system got up with immense parade by the First Napoleon, or the quaint Catholicism of Comte and Mr. Frederic Harrison,—and the difference will be perceived between true products of historical evolution and their counterfeits.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE HISTORIC STAGE AGAIN—CHARLES AND CLEMENT MAKING IT UP—SECOND DIET OF SPIRES—PROTESTANTS.

With his Bible at his elbow and the Elector at his beck, and Katie for house-angel—Katie who finds in the cares and joys occasioned by Johnny a new sermon every morning on the blessedness of marriage and the nonsense of monasticism—the Pope of Wittenberg may safely be left to his devices, while we revert briefly to an uncompleted subject, and turn the magic lantern of history upon the Pope of Rome.

A prisoner in the hands of Charles, Clement did not despair. If he fell short in practical insight and promptitude, his ingenuity in plotting was inexhaustible, and his clear, capacious, Medicean brain overlooked nothing in the most complicated situation. His Italian allies, supposing his fall to be irretrievable, had found consolation in eagerly seizing his accessible effects. The Venetians appropriated Ravenna and others of his towns —was it not well, said those pious men, to look after such places, when his afflicted Holiness could not? The Dukes of Urbino and Ferrara followed their example. Florence was his own peculiar town, the seat of his House. He had established its government in the

hands of the Cardinal di Cortona, and valued the possession of it more than that of Rome. The people now rose upon the Cardinal, hurled the Medicean statues from their pedestals, and proclaimed those liberties which they prized so dearly, and for which Savonarola had pleaded with the dying Lorenzo. In Italy was no help for Clement; and he had opportunity to master, once for all, the fact that elaborate leagues and coalitions, constructed on the principles of Macchiavelli's *Prince*, that is to say, without the element of conscience, are not to be depended on.

Henry of England, however, and, still more, the King of France, were alarmed at the astounding importance of Charles; and though nearly a year dragged on before the approach of an army under the banners of France startled the Imperialists from their Roman prey, still the knowledge that measures were being taken in that quarter strengthened the hand of Clement in his negotiations with the Emperor.

Charles was not unwilling to treat. He knew that there was still a vast population sure to thrill with indignant sympathy for a captive Pope; and he was himself too sincerely religious, too true a child of the Church, to be altogether at rest with his foot on the neck of the successor of St. Peter. As usual, too, he was in straits for money, his Cortes having been chary of supplies; and Clement, for all his troubles, was a moneyed man. The Vicegerent of Christ agreed to pay one hundred thousand crowns down, and an equal sum in a fortnight. It illustrates rather curiously what has

been said above, on the non-existence of National Churches before the Reformation, that Clement could, at this time, stipulate to bestow upon Charles one-tenth of the ecclesiastical revenues of his patrimonial Spain.* When kings and peoples believe, in very truth, that a man carries at his girdle the keys of hell and of heaven, they will not grudge him Peter's pence; and even in the last stage of its spiritual decay and moral decrepitude the Papacy could make monetary grants to an Emperor.

In what verse of Scripture the Vicegerent of Christ was empowered to raise money, in order to buy himself out of prison, by selling cures of souls, as he now did, it would be difficult to discover. At all events, Clement emerged from the prison of St. Angelo in the last days of 1527, a wiser man than he entered it; and the friends of reformation in Germany, the progress of which was comparatively safe while Pope and Emperor were in strife, might justly discern, in the circumstance of their reconciliation, a looming in the distance of new peril to themselves.

But Clement, though enriched by his experience of defeat and imprisonment, had not made up his mind to throw himself wholly into the arms of Charles. One of his first acts on regaining his liberty was to address a letter of salutation to Lautrec the French general, who, at the head of a powerful army, had marched into Italy to contest the possession of the peninsula with the Imperial commanders. From the Castle of St. Angelo

* One such fact suffices to dispose of Lord Selborne's theory.

Clement had sent to Henry of England such expressions as encouraged him to hope that his marriage with Catherine of Arragon might be annulled. But Henry was remote, and Clement now refrained from sanctioning the divorce of Catherine to avoid giving offence to her nephew, the Emperor.

Meanwhile the cautious Pontiff watched the struggle between the armies of Francis and Charles, of which his beautiful Italy was the scene. He had strong motives for wishing to maintain his alliance with Francis. The French power was not likely to become greater in Italy than might suffice to balance that of Charles, whereas, if Francis were too completely extinguished, Charles could absolutely impose his will upon every State in the peninsula. It would doubtless in any case remain possible for Clement, by adroit management, to influence the Emperor; but he would feel himself in the position of a suppliant, or a courtier, rather than in that of one who held the balance between rival potentates; and Clement, with his clear Italian perceptions and his sensitive Medicean pride, was quite the man to feel the force of this distinction. During the year 1528, when at moments the star of Francis was rising, Clement remained undecided. But every month of time told in favour of the slow but circumspect and patient Charles, over whom it was easy to obtain advantage, but whom it was hard indeed to beat. He was the best of masters, and brilliant services were rendered him by men whom insufferable slights, injustices, and neglects drove from

the standard of Francis. The conflict between the mighty rivals for the foremost place in Italy and the world went on with varying fortune; while the Pope of Rome smiled alternately on this combatant and on that, or, indeed, simultaneously on both, in so far as it was possible for one face to wear two masks at the same time; and the Pope of Wittenberg, not caring much for these things, gave himself to the ministering of the Word and to prayer. At last the issue was determined. Charles, constant in adversity, vigilant in prosperity, triumphed over the fitfully energetic, unstable Francis. The gallant Lautrec died, "lamenting the negligence of his sovereign" and the precariousness of leagues. A few thousand men, the remnant of that splendid host which, beaconed by the spectacle of captured Rome, had marched into the peninsula two years before, were fain to "lay down their arms and colours, give up their baggage, and march under a guard to the frontiers of France."

How thoroughly is the whole pageant of that year, 1528, erased from the memory of the present generation! And yet the effect of those events is not yet exhausted; nor would it be possible for anyone, without forming some comprehension of them, to understand how link added itself to link in the evolutionary chain of modern history. For the Papal Vicegerent of Christ no sooner perceived that victory was to perch finally on the helm of Charles than he decided for the stronger party; suspended his smiling upon Francis, and concentrated his attention on the task of ingratiating

himself with his rival. Anxious, like a Pope and an Italian, to steal a march upon his allies, he set about concluding on his own account the Treaty of Barcelona. Among the peace-offerings which he placed upon the altar of Charles one of the most conspicuous was the decisive rejection of English Henry's application for a divorce. Henry was one whom it was not safe to play with, and his anger on finding that he had been mocked burnt hot. He became thoroughly estranged from the Pope, and transferred to himself in the course of a few years the entire jurisdiction, spiritual as well as temporal, which had been possessed by the Popes in England. The English—countrymen of Wickliffe and the Lollards—were not unprepared to receive the Gospel; but no instinct has been more stubborn in Englishmen than to do all things under sanction of King and law. In formally breaking the yoke of the Popes, therefore, from the neck of the English people, Henry had done a memorable thing. True, he intended the revolt to be from Roman jurisdiction, not from Roman doctrine, but to exclude the authority and at the same time safe-guard the doctrine proved impracticable.

Having Clement, in the negotiations attendant on the conclusion of the Treaty of Barcelona, completely in his power, Charles, who possessed a fine and far-seeing perception of his own interest, discerned that most might be made of the occasion by treating him with indulgence. If you have a Pope among your retainers it will not be politic to deprive him by

contemptuous treatment of those prerogatives in virtue of which his name is one to conjure with. All the monarchs of that age—the circumstance is curiously interesting to us moderns—were religious, though it by no means followed that their religion made them good men; and the religion of Charles was without question sincere. He had not ceased to be a Roman Catholic; and it was not with an *exclusively* political object that he wished to see the general system of Roman Catholic Christendom, of which himself and the Pope were the pillars, restored and maintained. He could not feel personally at ease so long as the spiritual ban of the Pontiff rested upon him. A prominent condition, accordingly, in the pacification between Charles and Clement was the granting of absolution by the Pope to all who had been concerned in the capture and sack of Rome. The Emperor, thus reconciled to the Church, was to co-operate with Clement in setting bounds to Lutheranism, and in recalling the Germans to allegiance to the Holy See. But the concession which, beyond all else, was dear to the successor of St. Peter, the incarnation of Christ-like unworldliness, was that in virtue of which Charles linked himself in bonds of family relationship with Clement, by bestowing upon Clement's nephew, Alexander de Medici, the hand of his natural daughter. Such was the Treaty of Barcelona, signed in June, 1529, by which the Vicegerent of Christ cut in before his allies and secured golden terms for himself. It was succeeded by a general accommodation between Francis and Charles.

These events could not but cast their shadow before. The party of reaction and the party of reformation in Germany had alike prepared for what was coming. While Charles and Clement were arranging matters in 1529, a new Diet was held at Spires, and the reactionists exerted themselves to obtain a reversal of that ordinance of the Diet of 1526 which had given to the reformed doctrines a legal position in Germany. Had it been possible, the Papist leaders would have forced back the Diet on the old Edict of Worms, but in this they were baffled. Then they took up another line of defence and aggression. Where the Worms Edict had been enforced, it was, they urged, to be maintained; but all further propagation of the reformed doctrines, all religious innovation whatever, was to be forbidden, pending the assemblage of a General Council. That is to say, the friends of reformation were to accept defeat where their adversaries declared themselves in the ascendent, and at the same time to abjure all thought of progress.

This doom of arrest and paralysis—this imperious mandate, "Hitherto shall ye come, but no further,"—could not be brooked by the followers of Luther. They possessed the advantage of being admirably led. Philip of Hesse supplied some elements of sound counsel that were wanting in Luther himself. Bowing down, more almost than was due, to the letter of Scripture, and finding the civil authority ordained of God, Luther regarded with favour a doctrine which one might have held to be specially repugnant to his sturdy individualism

and rugged independence, the doctrine of passive obedience. It was too much his notion that devout Germans, if their Emperor commanded them to renounce the truth, should simply die at the stake without a murmur. God had committed the sword to Charles; it was not for his subjects to instruct him how to use it. In the Empire, Philip was vassal to Charles, and Luther scowled disapproval on the vassal whenever he manifested a disposition to resist his liege lord. Luther's letters abound with expressions of annoyance and censure in relation to the frank pugnacity of Philip. But the latter had in fact apprehended a broader truth than that on which his theological monitor insisted. He also, as well as Charles, was a civil ruler; he also was commissioned by God to bear the sword; and if the Emperor passed beyond the limits of his constitutional authority, it was his right and duty, and the right and duty of every other member of the Reich, to confront the Imperial injustice in arms. As time went on, Luther did not fail to appreciate the strength of this contention; but he never entered into it with an enthusiasm even remotely comparable to that with which he wielded what was, in his view, the distinctive and sole instrument both of defence and aggression for Christians, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

The most ripe and recent inquiries seem to prove that it was about this very time, when the Evangelical Princes and Free Cities of Germany were beginning to put shoulder to shoulder and organise resistance, in arms if necessary, to the Emperor and the Pope, that

Luther composed *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,* a psalm of trust in God, and in God only, as the protector of Christians. He took no fervent interest, however, in the Diet; and Philip and his intrepid associates derived little active support from him.

These were inflexibly determined that the decree of the majority should not be assented to. Philip of Hesse, John of Saxony, Markgraf George the Pious of Brandenburg-Anspach, the Dukes of Lunenburg and Brunswick, the Prince of Anhalt, and the representatives of Strasburg, Nürnberg, and twelve other free cities, entered a solemn protest against the Popish resolution. They were called PROTESTANTS. The name, as is customary with names that felicitously express and embody facts, was caught up in Germany and passed into every country in Europe and the world. In the course of four centuries it has been garlanded with associations of no ignoble kind; and all, to this hour, who claim that truth shall be unveiled, and that no Pope, no Kaiser, shall congeal the ever-advancing stream of progress and improvement, may take an honourable pride in tracing their spiritual descent to the intrepid Philip and the magnanimous and simple-hearted John.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MARBURG CONFERENCE—LUTHER AND ZWINGLI.

So far Philip and his noble-minded associates had been successful. The Emperor—meaning well, almost heroic in his highest moods, yet never quite rising out of the region of grandiose halfness into steadfast vision of the whole, the good, the true—and the subtle, scheming, worldly-minded Pope, as they worked out their agreement of Barcelona, might perceive, dimly arising in the distance, like the cliffs of a grand new country showing through mist, the organised and embattled power of Protestant Germany.

But another and still more difficult, delicate, ideally noble enterprise shaped itself before the ambition of Philip—an enterprise in which even partial success would entitle him to higher praise than the most dazzling feats of warlike puissancy and prevalence. An enterprise, we may add, which brings him and his ambitions—his friends, opponents, and entire environment—more closely home to us, in these last years of the nineteenth century, than his strictly political and military activities could possibly do. The problem of Christian harmony is a problem of to-day; the problem of Protestant concord, apart from the larger question,

awaits solution at this hour; and Philip of Hesse stands forth among the men of his generation crowned with the high honour of first erecting the banner of union amid the clamour and clash of the great Protestant awakening, and practically asking whether those who professed themselves the servants and soldiers of Christ might not be at peace with one another.

Between the formal presentation of the Protestant claims at Spires, and the actual carrying out of the Papal and Imperial machinations foreshadowed in the Treaty of Barcelona, there intervened a breathing space of several months. This breathing space it was that Philip seized upon for his grand attempt to realise a common programme for all who adhered to the Reformation cause. "Come," said he in effect, with the glow of ingenuous hope and ardour on his young brow, "you Luther, who are the captain of God's host in Germany, and you Zwingli, who have answered so intrepidly from the Alps to the German appeal, will you not, with candid earnestness, face to face, compose your differences, so that we laymen may exult in the light and leadership of you both?" Could anything be more reasonable? And yet there were difficulties in the way. For grave dissensions had arisen in the Protestant ranks.

The spiritual view of the Lord's Supper, as the true and potent antidote to the pseudo-sacrificial manducation of Christ's body and blood, met with assent so widespread and deliberate, and numbered among its adherents divines so fervently religious, so evangelically zealous,

so scripturally learned, that the idea of branding it with the name of heresy might well seem intolerable.

Philip's proposal was that the foremost representatives of the respective opinions should meet in conference in his Hessian town of Marburg, and there, candidly explaining, candidly questioning and answering, endeavour, under his friendly and impartial auspices, to arrive at agreement, or, were that impossible, to beat out, at least, a music to which both parties might march in the Reformation campaign.

Luther had no heart for the scheme. Philip, nearly twenty years his junior, struck him as an unquiet young man whose impulsive activity was not duly ballasted with judgment. The project of a grand anti-Papal coalition he looked on with suspicion. From anything like an appeal to the sword he now as always shrank, telling Philip, as he had told Sickingen and Hutten, that the weapons of the heavenly kingdom were not carnal. Though sceptical, however, as to the probability of success, he did not refuse to comply with Philip's invitation to a conference. Frankly informing the Landgrave that he expected little from the meeting, he said, as frankly, that he would not put it in the power of the Zwinglians to say truly that he was less willing than they were for peace and amity. He made warm acknowledgment, at the same time, of the nobleness of Philip's motive in aiming at conciliation.

In the opening days of October, in the year 1529, there was buzz of interest and excitement in Marburg. The town, in which Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia had

once dwelt, is described by Carlyle's graphic pen as "straggling up its rocky hill-edge towards its old castles and edifices on the top in a not unpicturesque manner; flanked by the river Lahn and its fertile plain." Thither had wended Zwingli and Œcolampadius from Switzerland, Bucer and Hedio from Strasburg, Luther, Melanchthon, and Jonas from Wittenberg, Myconius from Gotha. The magnanimous Philip took them all into his castle, and gave them princely entertainment.

Seldom has reigning personage played a part more illustrious than that of Philip of Hesse on this occasion. He enthusiastically appreciated and loyally honoured Luther. But he felt that, since the Book of world-religion had been thrown open to all readers, it would be infinitely sad if men of reverence, men of sober minds, men ingenuously desirous of knowing the truth, could not help quarrelling about its meaning. And though he did not presume to take up a dogmatic position against the Lutheran divines, or experience any difficulty in adjusting himself to acquiescence in the tenet of a bodily presence, there is no reason to doubt that the lucidity, simplicity, common sense of the purely spiritual interpretation of Christ's words had made a strong impression on his mind. Such was Philip of Hesse; one who deserved Zwingli's lofty praise "as a most pious hero and Christian prince."

Luther, we may presume, appeared before Philip in the black coat for which he had thanked the Elector John in the previous August. A word may be due to

that letter as we pass. John had sent his dear Doctor a present of clothes whose quality had seemed to the latter almost incompatible with the homeliness befitting a preacher's wear. Some friend of Luther's seems to have asked the Elector to send those clothes, impelled probably by the Doctor's threadbare appearance. In the letter Luther begs the Elector to pay no attention to people who say that he is in want of necessaries, but to wait until he himself applies. If officious friends cut in between him and the Elector, he will become, he says, shy to beg on behalf of others, far worthier of help than he. How beautiful in its antique honour and goodness is this!

In relation to the main object of the gathering, Luther's mood was harsh and hopeless. Not only was he peremptory and dogmatic in condemning the views of the Zwinglians on the sacrament, but disposed to cherish suspicion of their general orthodoxy. Melanchthon, too, was cautious, timorous—not frank and confiding, as one who felt himself among friends. Philip, with generous craft, strove to bring the opponents together in social intercourse, so that some of the angular antagonism might be rubbed down. The Switzers were disposed to be perfectly frank and cordial.

Haunted as he was by suspicions and misgivings, Luther was a passionate lover of clearness and fairness, and his first object was to ascertain the exact limits of difference between Zwingli and himself. Seizing his pen, therefore, he wrote down, in compact, diamond-clear propositions, fourteen in number, the essential

verities of the Christian faith, as believed by the Saxon Reformers. Were the Switzers prepared to accept these? The answer was distinct. Yes, they were. With a magnanimous frankness, and a freedom from scrupulosity, and vain conceit, and wiredrawing subtlety, exemplary to controversialists for ever, Zwingli, Œcolampadius, and their colleagues declared that, apart from the one point of the Eucharist, Luther's theology was theirs. Some of the articles drafted by him were not precisely such as Zwingli would have himself set down. Firm in his assent to the body of catholic dogma, it is certain that, both in his doctrine of the Triune God and in his doctrine of sin, Zwingli would have preferred expressing himself in terms less rigidly Augustinian, and more in harmony with the modern development of Protestant theology, than those of Luther. There was a Dantesque grimness in Luther's view of sin; Zwingli dwelt more upon the weakness and imperfection of humanity: but in their exultant apprehension of the power and radiancy of grace, burning up sin in the soul by the life of a present Christ, they were at one. Therefore, with the consciences of men and heroes, not of scrupulous pedants, Zwingli and his associates accepted the main canons of Luther's faith as theirs.

Philip, therefore, has already had some reward for his pains. It is well to know that, on all but one point, the Reformers of Wittenberg and the Reformer of Zurich agree. But the point of difference remains, and neither Philip nor his guests have any thought of evading it. After much gently guileful generalship on

the part of Philip, and preliminary tentative colloquies of Melanchthon with Zwingli and of Œcolampadius with Luther, the two chiefs confronted each other.

A table, covered with a black velvet cloth, divided Luther and Zwingli. Melanchthon flanked the one, Œcolampadius the other. Before a word was spoken, Luther rose up, and, taking a piece of chalk, wrote on the velvet, in Latin, the words, "This is my body." It was an intimation that he had steeled his heart against argument. Zwingli, with the lucidity that characterised his thinking, quietly observed that Luther was begging the question. In respect of logical form this is incontestable. There was no dispute as to the presence of those words in Scripture; the difference turned wholly on their interpretation: and it was obviously a *petitio principii* on Luther's part to affirm, before proving, that the interpretation *must* be his own. Unless he meant this, he meant nothing; for the words had as much significance in their place in Scripture as they could have when chalked by him on velvet.

But it would be unfair to Luther to say that he confined himself to doggedly maintaining that the words in themselves precluded discussion. Such was indeed his main contention, but he did not scruple to adduce considerations tending to prove the literal interpretation to be the right one. The literal sense, he was particularly careful to say, did not *exclude* a spiritual eating and drinking of Christ. The spiritual receiving he strongly insisted upon, not admitting for one moment that his opponents did more justice to the spiritual

receiving than he. But there was a corporeal eating besides; Christ, he urged, had distinctly said so. Zwingli pointed out that if matter, as distinguished from spirit, admits of definition, it is in the nature of things impossible that one and the same body can be at one and the same time in two different places. Christ, when on earth, had never been in two places at once; how could the bodily Christ, at God's right hand in heaven, be manducated, at one and the same moment, in a hundred places? Luther declined all explanation. Mathematics could not overrule the *ipsissima verba* of Scripture. He derived, in truth, great consolation from the arguments from natural impossibility relied upon by the Zwinglians, for they helped him to persuade himself that the whole difficulty arose from their yielding to subtle temptation by the devil of rationalism.

He was much more concerned to answer the arguments which Zwingli brought forward from the Bible itself. In the sixth chapter of John we learn that Christ spoke of His disciples eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The expressions caused surprise and offence. An explanation was asked for and given. That explanation afforded, said Zwingli, the manifest key to the corresponding expressions used with reference to the bread and wine in the supper. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The force of this seems so irresistible, and Luther's attempts to controvert it are so weak, that one

pauses in amazement. The words, said Luther, were not spoken with reference to the eating and drinking in the Supper. True, to this extent, that they were not spoken on the occasion when the Supper was instituted. But if Christ had once clearly stated a principle, and elucidated its application, was it necessary for Him on every occasion when it came to be applied to guard against mistake in the application? By a singularly strained exegesis Luther argued that the flesh referred to in the clause, "the flesh profiteth nothing," was not the flesh of Christ but the flesh of sinful men. The admonition, he would have it, was to avoid eating the flesh of Christ in a fleshly manner. Would it not, he asked, be blasphemy to say that the flesh of Christ did not profit? And so the imaginary spectre of blasphemy was evoked to frighten men back into the caverns of superstition. The eating of man's flesh must of necessity be either cannibal eating, when all spiritual significance is swallowed up in horror, or metaphorical eating, when it is expressive in the highest possible degree, as an inculcation of no mere outward discipleship, but of inward acceptance, of unreserved affection, of assimilation, of identification.

But, as Zwingli, with brave candour, admitted, and Luther boastfully proclaimed, the metaphorical sense could not be *demonstrated;* that is to say, the argument in behalf of it could not be cast into compulsory logical form. Christ did not in so many words apply the principle that flesh profiteth nothing to the institution of the Supper. Metaphorical language affects different

minds in different ways, and some minds are curiously incompetent to discriminate between metaphorical and literal expressions. Luther trumpeted loudly, and no doubt sincerely believed, that the Zwinglians had nothing better than metaphysical quibbles and cobwebs to depend on. Dragging from the table the velvet cloth inscribed with the words "This is my body," he held it up in sign of final defiance, and of announcement that the combat had concluded. Ending as he had begun, as lucid Zwingli said, with a *petitio principii!*

Agreement in all points of dogma, then, between the Saxon and the Swiss reformers, is impossible. What next? The question of Christian union amid difference remains; a question as freshly interesting at this hour as it was in the castle of Marburg on those October days of 1529.

Mark the position. The open Bible has been appealed to. Men of moral and intellectual quality far above the average of the race, men of religion unfeigned and honesty unimpeachable, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, have compared their reading of it. They cannot agree as to its meaning. Shall they, recognising their common loyalty to and love for Christ, conclude that they are at liberty to obey His commands as they read and understand them, calling each other Christian brethren, and working together for the salvation of mankind?

The Switzers, ardently seconded by Philip of Hesse, reply in the affirmative. It is a memorable, most

significant fact, which cannot be pressed too forcibly on the consideration of religious persons, that the reasonable party proved also to be the party of union. Zwingli was willing to leave the question of a corporeal presence to the individual conscience, as instructed by Scripture, and to join in fellowship with those who answered it in Luther's way. But Luther set his face as a flint against compromise. The corporeal presence was, in his view, part of God's truth, and to enter into fellowship with those who rejected it would be sin. To hear this from those lips drew hot tears from the eyes of Zwingli. To speak it, we may be very sure, cost Luther pain. "We are not able," he cried, "to accept you as brethren, but we hold out to you the hand of charity." Had there been any baseness in Zwingli's heart—any nagging worm of egotism or meanness of vulgar pride—he would have repelled this minor proposal as too condescendingly civil. But he feared God, and he could not be angry with Luther for having done as *his* fear of God compelled him to do. Therefore Zwingli took joyfully the proffered hand, and there was cordial greeting and embracing between the Swiss and the Saxon.

It had been better if Luther and Zwingli, Melanchthon and Œcolampadius, with the glad acquiescence of magnanimous Philip, had made the crested ridge of Marburg for ever illustrious by proclaiming it, as a first principle of Christian union, that in all cases where honest men, of sound brain and faith unfeigned, candidly differ as to the sense of Scripture, no denial or

curtailment of Christian fellowship shall be adjudged by or to any. If Luther and Zwingli had agreed to this they would have reached a higher level of spiritual and ethical attainment than has been reached by Christendom at this day. But they attained to the virtual, if not the articulate, admission, that Christians who believe in one way possess no right to *subject to constraint* Christians who believe in another way. The Papacy, in theory and in practice, arrogated to itself the right to *compel acceptance* of its dogmas under penalty of death by fire.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE WITTENBERG POPE.

Though he had no adequate conception of the value of what had been effected at Marburg, Luther makes it clear from the tone of his letters that the forebodings he had entertained as to Philip's attempt, gave place, when all was over, to mild satisfaction not without a spice of surprise. It was no slight gain, he remarked in a note of 4th October, 1529,* that the antagonist parties, whose strife had formerly been acrimonious, would henceforth live in peace and charity with each other. They might be enemies, but they had looked into each others' eyes, and knew what, even as enemies, was due from each to each. They had bound themselves to no league of pusillanimous silence, they would argue and confute like brave truth-seekers, but "without invective." A thing more easy to intend than to realise, but surely a humane and chivalrous as well as most reasonable arrangement.† "I am glad, my Amsdorf," he writes, "that you are so glad about our Marburg synod, diminutive indeed in appearance, but in the heart of the matter efficacious." ‡

The immensity of the subject matter on which they agreed, as contrasted with *ille reliquus scrupulus*, their

* De Wette, 1154. † De Wette, 1156. ‡ De Wette, 1162.

one point of difference, could not but make an impression on Luther. He allowed to another correspondent that the Switzers had been "humble and modest enough," * and that the extent to which they harmonised with him had exceeded his hopes. The Prince of Hesse, he observes to a third, had treated the theologians "with magnificent and splendid hospitality."

A day or two before leaving Marburg he wrote to Katie in happy mood. "Dear Master or Lord Kate," he calls her, a form of address which may be taken as a genial hint that she had developed powers of domestic government. "Our friendly talk at Marburg is at an end, and in almost all things we are at one." Zwingli's best argument was, he says, the impossibility of body being in more than one place at once. Œcolampadius dwelt on the symbolic sense of the sacrament. "We are all fresh and well, and live like princes. Kiss Lenschen and Johnny for me." † Lenschen was his infant daughter, Magdalena.

In tracing his public career we have lost sight of the incidents that varied the quiet tenor of his domestic life. On the 10th of December, 1527, a daughter had been born to him, whom he named Elizabeth. In August of the following year he tells Hausmann that his "little Elizabeth" is dead. He is distressed to an extent that amazes himself; his heart is crushed like a woman's; he never could have believed that a parent's heart so yearned towards his offspring. ‡ In May, 1529, Magdalena had been born; and the little girl Magdalen,

* De Wette, 1159. † De Wette, 1155. ‡ De Wette, 1021.

though last come, takes precedence, we observe, in the order of kissing, of Johnny the son and heir.

Casting a retrospective glance into that household, where Papa Luther sits pen in hand in his study, while Herr Katie either sits beside him or promotes industrious order in the kitchen quarters, we perceive not a little on which it is pleasant for the eye to rest and for the mind to dwell. We see an heroic life, instinct with perennial nobleness, not without veinings of Heaven's beauty, tones of Heaven's music, under the simplest conditions of a German home. Luther was sore smitten at times, both by illness that brought him to what seemed the very gates of death, and by temptations that wrapped his mind in gloom, but he never sank into despair, never failed to emerge, after a little while, into the clear light of trust and hope. His invincible courage was a positive protection against the frequently recurrent plague of the period, and that not only to himself, but, through the contagion of his example and the stimulus of his voice, to others also. While feebler and more cowardly natures crouched in terror, like birds fluttering in the grass while hawk or eagle sails above, he boldly faced the terror, refused to quit Wittenberg when university professors and well-to-do citizens took flight, and thus, to a really surprising extent, secured the safety of himself and those immediately round him. The medicinal virtue of a dauntless mind was never displayed more finely, or with more practical instruction for the scientific student of medicine, than by Martin Luther. Perhaps the most

signal of the instances in which he put the courage-cure in practice was that of the frightful "English plague," or sweating sickness, which swept over Germany in the year of the Marburg Conference. The true disease was incurable; but the mere terror and horror of it overpowered many who were uninfected, and who died from sheer "pusillanimity." In Magdeburg from eight hundred to a thousand persons were oppressed with fear and began to sweat. Between twenty and thirty actually died, from the violence of the heat into which the paroxysms threw them; but the others regained command of their nerves and convinced themselves that they had been the absurd victims of their own fear. Luther gives the names of four whom, among others, he and his friends had managed to save by encouraging them to shake off the illusion. "They are now laughing at themselves and saying that, had they not been wakened up, they might have been in their graves." There was not a trace, however, of bravado or stage-heroism in his attitude towards the plague. Those who, consistently with duty, could fly from the infection, were, he taught, not only permitted but bound to do so. His own place, as a pastor, was among his flock, and most of all when they were in peril or in sickness. Not only, therefore, in the case of the sweating sickness, but in that of other plagues by which towns were constantly being desolated in the sixteenth century, he refused to budge. The plague shrank from him, account for it as we choose. Possibly Katie may have been an ally against the prototypes of typhus and

cholera, though not living under the eye of a sanitary inspector. Cleanliness, order, and health have been sisters in all generations.

But there were cheerful times—in fact, they were the generally prevalent times—in the Luther household. Friends could not be lacking to the friendliest and most open-handed of men. Gifts of golden apples, of toys for Johnny, of a clock, whose mechanism gave great delight to our Papa, came in. Luther's mind, for all his contempt of Zwingli's science, as against the letter of Scripture, was of a most inquisitive, scientifically-curious character, and he had much pleasure in prying into and fingering the clock. He liked working with tools, gardening tools and husbandman's tools especially; and his man-of-all-work, Wolfgang, was a present help on such occasions.

Nor was the modest home unvisited by persons of distinction. One day there alighted at the door, after a ride of two hundred miles from the Culmbach and Voigtland regions, far south, the Markgraf George of Anspach, whom we saw helping Philip of Hesse to induce the Protestant Powers of Germany to take hand in support of the common cause. George had come in a very quiet way, attended by but six horsemen, for a word of counsel from Dr. Luther, Having zealously embraced the new doctrines, he was bent upon prosecuting in his own territories the enterprise of reformation. But there were difficulties—there was, in fact, the recurrent difficulty of introducing the new without dealing too harshly with the old. George was but one of a

hundred who consulted Luther on the problem. The details of the consultation we do not possess; but Carlyle is doubtless correct as well as vivid in his sketch of its nature and result. "Luther cleared the doubts of George; George returned with a resolution taken; 'Ahead then, ye poor Voigtland Gospel populations! I must lead you, we must on!' And perils enough there proved to be, and precipices on each hand. But George eagerly, solemnly attentive, with ever new light rising on him, dealt with the perils as they came; and went steadily on, in a simple, highly manful and courageous manner."

Another of the great ones who came to have his doubts cleared by Dr. Luther was a brother of George, Albert, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, who abandoned the whole monkish business, and declared himself the Protestant Duke of Prussia. Luther, consulted by Albert, had given decisive advice. The Teutonic Order, like all monastic orders whatever, was in his view an organised attempt to substitute the priest's false chastity, renunciation of marriage, for God's true chastity, faithfulness in married life. To quit monkery and take a wife was Luther's counsel. Albert obeyed. He and the Knights who adhered to him went boldly into the Protestant movement, he becoming Hereditary Duke of Prussia, they continuing to serve under him. The Order did not as a whole adhere to Albert; the Popish part continued in possession of substantial properties; but at this point the Order of Teutonic Knights ceases to be a real factor in history.

Thus from the quiet fireside of Papa Luther, in grey Wittenberg, which in these years has been getting itself girdled about with fortifications, did words go forth that entered as living forces into the evolutionary course of things. Quickened by his inspiration, princes felt themselves empowered to become evangelists. Ladies of royal strain had from the first been well inclined to his cause. Charles's sister, the widowed Queen of Hungary, and Francis the First's sister, the Queen of Navarre, gave ear to him as to an oracle of God. On the 28th of March, 1528, we find him in a letter to Link * chronicling that flight from Berlin of the Marchioness of Brandenburg, wife of the Elector Joachim, on which Carlyle picturesquely touches in his "Life of Frederick the Great." She had partaken of the Sacrament in both kinds, and one of her daughters had whispered the fact to Joachim, who was for maintaining the old forms and ceremonies. Palace rumour, exaggerating the wrath of Joachim, put the lady in fear of being imprisoned for life. With the assistance of her brother, Christian II., the ex-King of Denmark, she effected her escape in the night. "On the dark road her vehicle broke down; a spoke given way—'Not a bit of rope to splice it,' said the improvident groom. 'Take my lace veil here,' said the poor Princess; and in this guise she got to Torgau." Prince John of Saxony, generous and manly always, invited her to occupy "the fine Schloss of Lichtenberg." There she continued to reside for many years, in frequent intercourse with Luther, and

* De Wette, 965.

permitted by the relenting Joachim, who however did not urge her to return, to see her children. These were strongly in sympathy with her in her evangelical tendencies. "She saw Luther's self sometimes; 'had him several times to dinner;' he would call at her mansion when his journeys lay that way. She corresponded with him diligently; nay once, for a three months, she herself went across and lodged with Dr. Luther and his Kate; as a royal lady might with an heroic sage."

But royal and princely personages, male or female, occupy a markedly unimportant place in the correspondence of Luther, as compared with the ordinary and everyday objects of his ministerial attention; the poor and needy, or those who were plunged in spiritual anguish. Never had the poor a more persistent advocate. To plead for the fatherless and the widow, to help the helpless, was a divine service always being carried on in the house of this Christian Papa. In cases of domestic disagreement and difficulty his advice was always obtainable, always prompt, clear, and wise. We saw how he dealt with such as voluntarily entangled themselves in the net of speculative theology, attempting by force of intellectual subtlety to wriggle out of their difficulties, and succeeding only in wriggling more deeply into the inextricable coil. But when the broken in spirit applied to him with a practical purpose, when the modest and humble-minded told him that God had forsaken them, and that their portion was despair, then his method was tender as well as simple. We have a letter which he wrote in July,

1528,* to one whose case had been laid before him by a friend. The sufferer had been driven to the verge of self-slaughter by ruminating on the idea that God might have foreknown his perdition and that his salvation might therefore be impossible. Those who recollect the uncompromising sternness with which Luther maintained against Erasmus the absolute sovereignty of God may be astonished at the fountain-like freedom and fulness with which he now, in God's name, makes the offer of salvation. Without reserve he adheres to the grand Biblical principle enunciated, he says, by Ezekiel: "God wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn and live" (*sic*). To this corresponds, in his view, the Gospel promise: "The righteousness of God by faith in Christ is in all and upon all men." He instructs the troubled applicant that if any wind of evil comes moaning to his soul with suggestion that these words are not for him, he is to know it for a devil's message, a blast from hell. Calling on God for acceptance, he is to dismiss all fear and doubt, to fix his thoughts not on perdition but on salvation, and to give ear to no curious questionings. "You have a good, sound, direct road"—this is the gist of Luther's counsel—"why should you go off in long, roundabout vagrancies? God the Father has with His finger pointed to Christ, and with His voice cried, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear Him.' If you are too deaf to hear these words, and in your despair cannot lift your eyes to the Father in the

* De Wette, 1016.

heights of Heaven, why do you not see and hear the Son, who stands in the meeting of the ways, where every one must pass by, and in like manner, nay, much more vehemently, with a sound as of a trumpet, proclaims: 'Come, come, whither would you wander with your distracted questionings? You will never attain salvation through these vain dreams. Come, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He says not only come, but come all. No one is shut out, be he who he may; even if he were the vilest of miscreants. The harlots and the sinners are accepted—they rather than the self-righteous worldlings who make parade of their unspotted garments."

Not by any means obsolete, though trite enough in sound, are these sentiments of the Protestant Pope. Among the presumptions and plausibilities that are urged, now with grave pathos, now with flippant pertness, against Christianity, none perhaps turns up more frequently than this—that the liberality of its promises is belied by the niggardliness of its reservations. "Many are called, but few are chosen." What is the use of obeying the call unless you know that it has not been cancelled by the withholding of the choice? Luther deems this a fatuous question, confident that if a man honestly accepts the Gospel offer God will overcome all difficulties in making it good. Only believe, and all things are possible unto you. If God's name is on the cheque, trust Him to honour it, though you do not understand the arrangements made for payment in the Bank of the Universe.

But then emerges sharply the other and opposite objection—in debate, especially when religion is attacked, it is the fashion to smite first on the right cheek and then on the left. Does not Luther, in thus bidding publicans and harlots believe and be saved, divorce religion from morality, and make the acceptance of an intellectual dogma the price of heaven? In a letter written apparently within six or eight weeks of the one in which he bids the afflicted soul rejoice in the plenitude of Divine grace, Luther has occasion to touch upon the question of making the grace of God vassal to licentiousness. One of the boldest of the Evangelical preachers, John Agricola, was located at this time, September, 1528, in Eisleben. In him, as in few, Luther recognised a kindred spirit; but now, to his distress and amazement, a gravely authoritative report reached him that Agricola was putting forth strange views, and seeming to deny that pure morality was essential to salvation. Without delay he writes to Agricola,* in a tone of alarm and remonstrance. He has heard, he says, that his friend teaches "that there can be faith without works." Against an error so poisonous he warns Agricola as an obvious temptation of the devil. The remonstrance was for the time successful. The most amicable relations were provisionally restored between the correspondents.

But the agreement was temporary and illusive. It became indubitable that there had been fire where there was smoke. Agricola stood forth as ringleader of a

* De Wette, 1030.

theological faction that pressed the Pauline doctrine of grace through faith to an un-Pauline extreme which is condemned by the practical apostle, James. They were called Antinomians. Under colour of exalting the Gospel they degraded the law, and maintained that though one were living in known sin, yet if he had faith he was in a state of salvation. This error was assailed by Luther with as vehement repugnance as he displayed in respect of any dogma of the Papacy.

One other word, and we turn the page on the letters of this opulent period. Wenzel Link had written asking him whether it was lawful for the magistrate to slay false prophets. It was a question that touched Luther on his weak side, for his soul had been vexed, ever since the Wartburg days, by a succession of perversities and distractions vouched for by men who vaunted themselves the prophets of God. Was he still prepared to stand by the glorious heterodoxy of which he had been accused at Worms, and to maintain that the heretic ought not to be put to death? He replies that he is averse to the judgment of blood even when the false prophet richly deserves death. Pointing to the Jewish dispensation, he notes that in process of time it came about that only "true prophets and innocent persons" were executed as deceivers of the people. "Wherefore," he concludes, "I can on no account admit that false teachers ought to be slain."* The words were written in July, 1528, and are to be received as the unalterable decision of Luther on this cardinal question.

* De Wette, 1013.

## CHAPTER VII.

CLEMENT'S HOPES AND WISHES—LUTHER'S FATHER'S ILLNESS—THE START FOR COBURG.

MEANWHILE the infallible and enthroned "servant of the servants of God" has been going on his prosperous way in what seems to the world, and is not far from being in reality, cordial understanding and alliance with Emperor Charles. When the Emperor appeared in Italy, in the autumn of 1529, there were grand doings at Bologna; a contrite Kaiser kissing the feet of Christ's Vicegerent, an exalted Pope setting the crown upon the head of Charles, as King of Lombardy and Emperor of the Romans. The wish nearest the heart of Clement now was that he might enlist the whole will and energy of Charles to put down this offensive revolt of the Germans against Papal authority.

There is, happily or unhappily, no doubt as to the nature of the Holy Father's intentions respecting his erring children in Germany. If they listened to his voice and asked forgiveness, well and good. They would be pardoned; but if they proved stubborn they must perish. "Fire and sword" were to eradicate "this poisonous growth." In the instructions of Cardinal Campeggio, the Pope's managing man in the

matter of the German Protestants, which instructions Herr von Ranke saw in a contemporary copy of undoubted authenticity, the method in which the heretics are to be treated is frankly outlined. Their property is to be confiscated. They are to be placed under the surveillance of Inquisitors, who will deal with them as the Spanish Inquisitors deal with the Moors. The University of Wittenberg is to be proscribed. Heretical books are to be burnt. The emancipated monks and nuns are to be sent back to their cloisters. No heretic is to be permitted to show face at any court. The treasuries of the Emperor are to be filled with the sums extorted from Protestants. In short, "every word," says Ranke, "breathes oppression, blood, and robbery." When ambassadors from the Protestant princes of Germany presented themselves before Charles at Bologna they met with a reception fitted to inspire the gravest apprehension as to the result of the Emperor's projected journey to Germany with a view to terminate the troubles. Nor were they permitted to return, but either put under arrest or bidden to form part of his retinue.

The danger, however, was hardly so great as the Protestants feared and as Clement hoped. Charles was incapable of the strenuous fire-and-sword proselytism of the successor of St. Peter. His faith in the infallibility of the Papal See was not implicit, nor was he sure that the Protestants were wholly in the wrong. He suggested, therefore, to Clement that the calling of a General Council would be the likeliest way to restore

harmony. In his heart Clement detested the idea of a General Council. It represented for him the most formidable and regular opposition to which the Papacy had in the course of its history been exposed. Clement, moreover, was a good financier; always had money in his purse; and was therefore sensitively alive to influences affecting the market for Papal wares. The mere whisper that words favourable to the calling of a General Council had passed the lips of the Emperor sent down the price of every office, every benefice, in the gift of the Pope. But Clement knew his Macchiavelli too well to meet what he saw to be a strong wish of his august ally with frank resistance. He made as if he gave way to the Imperial suggestion, but interposed conditions and diplomatic preliminaries. Meanwhile the Pope and the Emperor took different paths, Charles turning his face towards Germany, Clement attending to his many concerns in Italy.

The Diet of Augsburg, which met in the summer of 1530, and at which Charles played a prominent part, marks an epoch in the history of Luther and of Protestantism; but while the year is still only in its second month it falls to us to chronicle a matter of little consequence to the great world, but of much to Martin Luther. In those cold February days he heard from his brother James that old John Luther was sinking into an illness that threatened to be his last. The intelligence moved Martin greatly. Next to God he had reverenced and obeyed his father, and he justly held that in the main development of his own character and

career his father's influence had been profound. His first impulse now seems to have been to hurry to his father's bedside. But this was impracticable. He had recourse, therefore, to his pen, and addressed to his father a noble and characteristic letter.* He entreats both his parents to come to Wittenberg to be cherished by himself and Katie. The latter joined her entreaties to his "with tears." For the rest, the letter is occupied with such considerations as suggest themselves to a faithful pastor and a loving son, specialised by the circumstance that the son has been a world-moving reformer in religion, and that the father has intensely sympathised with him in his innovations. Martin thanks God that his father has emerged from the "gross darkness and error" of the "former" time, and has listened to the voice of Christ, calling him to accept the grace of God, and to look forward to an everlasting joy. His father, like himself, has had, he says, the seal of Divine approval in form of "calumny, shame, scorn, derision, contempt, hatred, and danger." These he takes for the true signs that we suffer with Christ and shall be partakers also of His glory. He depicts the consolalations which the Gospel affords to those that near the verge of life, thus curtaining the sick-bed of his father with visions as beautiful as ever crowded round the pencil of Angelico. Christ, he says, has for the sufferer conquered death and abolished sin; Christ and all holy angels look upon him, watching for the hour when his spirit will take flight.

* De Wette, 1185.

Luther sent this letter to Mansfeld by his nephew Cyriack, who had come thence to study at the university, and was an inmate of the convent home. John Luther's weakness was too great to permit of his undertaking the journey to Wittenberg; and the father and son never met again.

Public affairs were pressing their claims upon Luther. The Emperor was on his way to Germany, and the Diet was summoned for the 8th of April. The Elector John, the Landgrave of Hesse, the pious George of Culmbach, were keenly observing the situation, and meditating on the multitudinous matters that had to be arranged. For the scrupulously conscientious, like John and George, it was a preliminary question of vital importance whether it could in any case be lawful to resist the Emperor. John applied to Luther in March, 1530, for light upon this point, and the answer was in accordance with those high views of the Divine right of emperors which Luther always entertained. The princes and Protestants in general, if persecuted by Charles, were to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. But Luther at this time harboured confident hopes that the Emperor would not be a tool of the Pope, or deny reasonable terms to the reformers.

About the middle of March the Elector invited Luther, Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, and Bugenhagen to confer with him at Torgau, on the subject of the approaching Diet. On the 3rd of April, at the head of 160 horsemen, accompanied by the four theologians

from Wittenberg, Prince John started from Torgau for Augsburg. Luther's hymn had already begun to make itself a home in the hearts of Protestants; and as the cavalcade proceeded along the road, bound on a solemn errand, the stirring words and grave, sweet melody of *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* rose into the air. As they advanced by Altenburg, Weimar, and Saalfeld, Luther preached every day. On Easter Eve they arrived at Coburg.

## CHAPTER VIII.

COBURG—CROWS AND THEOLOGIANS.

Around Coburg town and fortress linger memories enough of Luther. Next after Wittenberg, Worms, and the Wartburg, Coburg is perhaps the best remembered of his places of sojourn. The tourist, inspecting the old castle, is shown a Reformation room, on whose walls, on gold ground, are painted the best known figures of the Reformation time. Here, says tradition, erringly, Luther composed his great hymn. The piece was written before, but he may very well have inscribed it, or one or two of its stanzas, on the wall. His own peculiar room is shown, whence he looked over extensive woods. From the eastern tower, highest of all, he could behold a mountain landscape.

It was thought advisable to leave Luther in the fortress of Coburg, while the Elector, with Melanchthon and the others, went on to Augsburg. The ban of the Worms Edict was still upon Luther, and to ignore it would have been to treat the Emperor with too easy contempt. It was now, moreover, known to all men, and half acknowledged by Luther himself, that he did not possess gifts of conciliation. At Coburg,

on the actual frontier of Saxony, he would occupy an advance post of observation on the Diet, and his influence would be more sensibly felt than it could have been if he had remained at Wittenberg. He made no serious opposition to the arrangement, though he did not like it. He knew that he had "an unruly tongue" * in his head.

A power of adjusting himself to circumstances, however, he possessed beyond most men; and learning that the Emperor had pulled up at Mantua, thus rendering it probable that his own stay in Coburg would be for some time, he took stock briefly of the advantages of his situation, and made up his mind promptly as to how he should employ himself. To landscape aspects we know him to have been by no means indifferent, and he describes the place to Melanchthon in one of those Latin superlatives which express the ultimate possibilities of beauty and delightfulness—*amœnissimus*. He pronounces Coburg most convenient also for study. The palace towers, he says, above the whole citadel, and of every room he holds the keys. Upwards of thirty men break bread within its walls, twelve of them being told off for night duty, and two being posted in the highest turrets as watchmen.

He tells Melanchthon that he will employ himself with the Psalms, the Prophets, and, partly in playful earnest, partly in earnest play, with Æsop. He had a strong idea that lessons of value in the practical wisdom of life might be conveyed to his beloved Germans

* De Wette, 1203.

through the ministry of Æsop. Of fables, proverbs, and folk-lore in general, he was very fond, and Matthesius, who, a little before this time, had begun his long and somewhat Boswell-like intercourse with the prophet-sage whom he adored, gives us the curiously interesting item that he, Matthesius, has seen Luther taking to table with him *Reineke Fuchs*. That there was in Luther a vein of humour we needed no Matthesius to make us aware, but it is a fresh and piquant trait that he could enjoy the mad frolic, the world-irony, the flings and freaks and manifold questionabilities of the great scamp-epic of the Middle Ages.

What charmed him most, however, in his new environment, was the immense colony of birds which filled the air with its clamours immediately under his window. His early letters are full of this. In a moment he discerns the analogy between the assemblage of jackdaws and the assemblies of divines and diplomatists, princes and statesmen, that meet and dispute at Diets of Augsburg and the like. He has, he says, a Diet under his window, where crows and jackdaws transact their noisy businesses. Night as well as day—or at least from earliest glimpse of dawn until after sunset—they cease not from the tumult. What a cry they do raise! Age croaking against youth, youth chattering down age, as if drink were in the heads of all. What a rushing along there is, not in clumsy carriages, but on wheels of glossy wings, that scornfully evade the shot of the huntsman! Their Kaiser he cannot distinguish, but their nobles and big swells (*grosse Hansen*) strut about

and grandly swing their tails. Their garb is indeed uniform, but richly black; and they have glittering eyes of the sky-grey (*grau-augig cæruleis*) tint. They show not the smallest respect to great palace and reception room, "for their own hall is vaulted with the fair, wide heaven; their floor is the open field, their furniture the pretty green branches, their boundary-walls the ends of the world." They are great men and mighty captains; and though he has not been able to interpret the particular import of their debates, he has gathered that they purpose to make war upon wheat, barley, oats, and all kinds of grain.

But we should err greatly did we fancy that this sunny and sportive interest in the garrulous birds was anything else than the sparkle of sunlight on deep water. The month of April is not past—or hardly past—when we find him strenuously at work, preparing, with his old instinctive power of setting to the mark, of doing the right thing at the right moment, an admonition, or paper of counsel, for those assembled in Diet at Augsburg. A momentary surprise may be occasioned by his addressing it to the *Geistlichen*, as if he spoke only to the ecclesiastics attending the Diet, but he appends, as motto, the words of the second Psalm, "And now, ye kings, be wise; be taught, ye judges of the earth." As he explicitly, and to the most practical effect, believed that kings and all in authority were God's ministers, and were bound to safeguard God's truth, he may be held to include among the *Geistlichen* all God's official servants, crowned and

uncrowned, who had come, or were fast coming, to Augsburg to discuss the spiritual interests of Christendom.

The piece is ruggedly characteristic of its writer. We have no Erasmian delicacy and deprecation—no elaborate show of humility or subtle flattery of the reader. He dashes into the heart of the business; paints with broad masses of colour which must arrest the most cursory eye; describes what he and his movement have done; and appeals to the rulers and judges of Christendom, *not* to take it upon them to patronise or prop up God Almighty's work, but to own that it has been a good work, and to lay no hand of violence upon it. He does not dwell separately on the point of doctrine, but sketches the practical reforms that have been introduced, and the abuses that have been overthrown or abated. Indulgences, auricular confession, traffic in masses, extravagances of saint-worship, celibacy of clergy, spurious chastity of monk and nun, Mary-worship carried to the pitch of sheer idolatry, figure in the list. This roll of reform embraces upwards of forty particulars, of which a considerable proportion are merely named. Having thus made the movement speak for itself, he asks the adversaries why they should harden themselves in their pride, yield nothing, make room for nothing, but insist on carrying all before them by sheer violence. What, he cries, is the aim and end of all Christian government but improvement? Has God appointed government as a tyranny or as a service? If they must snatch the

weapons of the persecutor, they will rush upon damnation, and their blood will be on their own heads.

Of strictly theological argument there is, in this treatise, a *minimum;* but Luther does not fail to bring out, in his own way, the vital difference between the Papal system and that which he received direct from Paul. In the one, a sacerdotal caste propitiated God. "My own consecrating Bishop," he cries, "when he set me apart for the ministry and gave the cup into my hand, spoke thus, and not otherwise than thus: *Receive the power of sacrificing for the living and the dead.*" The words now appear to him horrible beyond expression. "That the earth did not swallow us both was the partial and all-too-great patience of God, *unrecht und allzugrosse Gottesgeduld.*" In the other, the Pauline system, salvation was neither through sacrificing priest nor mystic sacrament, but by the grace of God.

The intense application with which he held himself to the composition of this treatise, and the stubborn industry with which he pushed on in the translation of so difficult an author as Ezekiel, now brought on an illness. He tells Melanchthon that his bodily man had fallen down fainting, while his inner man impetuously forced the pace. His head was tormented first with a tintinnabulation as of bells, then with a pealing and a rattling as of thunder. Had he not suddenly suspended all work, thus taking the pressure off the over-tasked brain, he would have fallen into syncope. His escape was narrow and difficult; for two days he trod as on the edge of the grave. "It is now the third day," he

says, "since I have looked at a syllable, or could do so. No more shall I work as of old; I hear the advancing step of age." Not without contrition does he think of his over-exertion, nor does he scruple to make of himself a deterrent example for the benefit of his dear Philip. "I lay my command upon thee, and I call upon our whole brotherhood to unite with me in compelling you, under penalty of anathema, to take care of that body-kin of yours, and not to do deadly mischief to yourself, and afterwards pretend that it was done in obedience to God. He is served by rest, and by nothing better than by rest. That was why He ordained the rigid observance of the Sabbath." * What a beautiful heroism, tender and true, in these words!

The *Admonition* was getting printed in Wittenberg; the identification of Gog and Magog with the Pope and the Turk had been, to Luther's satisfaction, established from Ezekiel; and the din in his ears had begun, we may hope, to yield to rest, when he heard that his father was dead. John Luther died on the 29th of May, 1530. He expired without suffering, in perfect tranquillity of trust in Christ. Martin shut himself into a room and wept. He was not one to yield to his feelings in public; but his letters bear witness to the depth of his sorrow. Somewhat curiously, he refers to John Luther as not only the dearest, but the gentlest, *suavissimus*, of fathers, and speaks of the infinite sweetness of his conversation. Through his father, he says, God had given him all he has and all he is.

* De Wette, 1211

Within the same month of June, 1530, in which he tells Melanchthon of the death of his father, he writes to Jerome Weller, a Wittenberg student, who was undertaking the private tuition of his son. And the letter to the tutor was promptly followed, perhaps accompanied, by a letter to son Johnny himself. It is nice to have letters of so entirely domestic a nature welling up among the theological correspondence in which, from Coburg, he almost fiercely exhorted Melanchthon and his other friends at Augsburg to defy and repel the Babylonish adversary. He had heard from Weller that Johnny was an industrious pupil, but he had also been told that Weller was himself afflicted with melancholy thoughts; and, therefore, after a word of gratified allusion to his son, he passes to the tutor, and gives him a series of admirably shrewd and practical hints on the subject of his mental trouble. "A sorrowful spirit," he says in Scriptural language, "dries the bones," and is everywhere condemned and proscribed by the Spirit that is Divine. Joy is the duty of youth, and sadness is to be rooted out of the heart. The first thing, therefore, to be done by one vexed by despondency is to lay it absolutely down that sadness is of the devil, and that God is a God of solace and joyfulness—a God, as Christ said, not of the dead, but of the living. "What, indeed, is life but joyfulness in the Lord?" The battle may be hard, but others have fought and conquered. It is a maxim of maxims in this conflict *never* to brood, never to pry into your own thoughts, never to follow the track into which they tempt you.

"No! the right way is to scorn and pass them by like the hissing of a goose." You cannot help the inrush of distracted fantasies, but you can refuse to harbour them. "You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can look out that they do not make their nests in your hair." It is useful and innocent to have recourse to the delights of social intercourse; nor ought such to be permitted to leave any sting of conscience behind: for God does not like vain and vapid despondency. Then follows the one expressly theological touch in the letter. There is a sadness, no doubt, appropriate to sin; but it ought to be "*brevis simul et jucunda*, brief, and not untouched with the burning joy vouchsafed *in promissione gratiæ et remissionis peccatorum*, in the promise of grace and forgiveness." * Nothing more splendidly true, more unwitherably fresh, has ever been written on the practical treatment of the mind.

Along with the letter to Weller goes the more celebrated one which he wrote to his son. Perhaps the sprightliness, the brilliant child-heartedness, of Johnny's letter may have been in part occasioned by the recollection, on Luther's part, that his tutor had tendencies to despondency. At all events, it is as gay as an extract from a fairy tale; and though there is religion in it, not a touch or trace can be found of that insistence on the depravity of human nature which played so important a part in the theology of the Reformation. He is glad to hear that Johnny "learns well and prays diligently"; when he returns home, he

* De Wette, 1227.

will bring him a pretty present. And then he launches out into a description of a fair and pleasant garden which he knows, where many children play, clad in little coats of gold, eating bright apples under the trees, and pears, cherries, plums big as eggs, or small ones if preferred. They sing, they leap, they frolic about. They have lovely little horses too, with golden bridles and silver saddles. These, said the man to whom the garden belonged, were dutiful and pious children, who did their tasks cheerfully, and loved to say their prayers. "Then, said I, dear man, I have a son called Johnny Luther; might he too come into the garden, and eat the beautiful apples and pears, and ride the little horses, and play with the children? He replied, If he loves his prayers, and is a docile and pious child, he will be welcome in the garden, with his young friends 'Lippus and Jost also; and when they are all there, they shall have pipes, drums, flutes, and stringed instruments. They will dance also, and shoot with little cross-bows." Not only Melanchthon's and Jonas's children, but Aunt Lena, who was presumably indispensable to Master Johnny's felicity, will be admitted. It is worthy of note that Luther gives dancing so prominent a place among the amusements of pious children.*

* De Wette, 1228.

## CHAPTER IX.

### LUTHER'S HOPES OF CHARLES.

Meanwhile, the Elector of Saxony, with his Melanchthon, Jonas, and Spalatin, had been showing front to the Papal foe in Augsburg. Melanchthon, whom Luther had often magnanimously referred to as the wise and calm theologian, whose patiently perfect methods were to follow upon his rough hacking and hewing in the jungle of error and abuse, was the acknowledged spokesman of the Protestants. Reverencing Luther, and sincerely accepting him as the captain of the Lord's host, Melanchthon, in his operations at Augsburg, worked upon those theological lines which at Marburg and elsewhere had been laid down under the eye of Luther. He thus drew up, with what has been recognised from 1530 until now as an exquisite combination of linguistic precision and theological mastery, the celebrated Confession of Augsburg. It was ready, at latest, in the beginning of May, and Luther, to whom it was sent, scanned it, in his high tower at Coburg, with an eager intensity of interest which the reader can imagine. On the 15th of the month, in a letter to the Elector, he pronounces on its merits. "It almost entirely pleases me. I can point to nothing in

it that I could improve or alter. And it would not do for me to try, as I cannot step so warily and softly." * That is to say, he admits it to be in all essential respects right, nay, exquisitely right, and yet it is not quite what he would have made it.

In the same letter, replying to Prince John's inquiry whether the Evangelicals at Augsburg may without sin submit to the will of Charles in the matter of ceasing to preach until a settlement has been arrived at, Luther, always more ready for concessions to kings than to priests, and forgetful, apparently, of what had been written by himself on his return journey from Worms, in vindication of his persistent preaching, gives it as his opinion that if Charles insists he must be obeyed. "The Kaiser is our master; the town and all is his." In the last resort, "his might is our right"; not, of course, to the extent of enforcing surrender of the Gospel of God, but to that of temporarily prohibiting its pulpit proclamation.

The tone of his exhortation to the Augsburg divines, and the extraordinary length of concession to which, in this letter, he consents to go, prove that he now cherished high hopes of an accommodation with the Emperor. Nor was it surprising that, in the summer of 1530, he might think it possible that Charles should break with the Pope, and permit reformation to be carried out on Evangelical lines. He knew that Pope and Kaiser had for years been engaged in sanguinary strife. He knew that Rome had been pillaged by an

* De Wette, 1213.

Imperial army. He knew that the policy of Charles had, in the meanwhile, been one of conciliation towards the German Protestants, and that the settlement arranged at the first Diet of Spires had placed them practically on a platform of public recognition. He did not know, however, what had passed since then in private colloquy between the Emperor and the Pope. He could not estimate with comprehensive accuracy the change in the situation resulting from the Pope's consciousness of being vanquished, and the Emperor's consciousness of being victor. Charles was studiously conciliatory in his demeanour to the Protestants, and carefully avoided giving them offence. Luther was prepared to trust him, and to put the most favourable interpretation upon his proceedings. When the heads of the German Popish party, Duke George, Joachim of Brandenburgh, and the Dukes of Bavaria, on their hastening to meet him at Innspruck, were received with marked coldness, Luther noted the fact with exultation. Two or three letters written by the Kaiser to the Elector in a tone of clemency* fanned his hopes. The Imperial Chancellor, Mercurinus, he observes, has declared against violent counsels, and may, he adds, prove a Naaman raised up by God in the Court of Charles to work for the spiritual Israel. "Only let us pray," he fervently exclaims; "our prayers have begun to be heard; let us not cease to pray."† So late as the 19th of June he again applies to the Emperor his phrase of affectionate admiration, *das*

* De Wette, 1217. † De Wette, 1217.

*fromme edele Blut Carolum*, the pious, noble Charles, describing him as a sheep among wolves.* A curiously and pathetically interesting study in character is presented by these letters of Luther, in their almost childlike innocence of affectionate admiration for his Kaiser, as contrasted with their abhorrent scorn of Pope Clement on the one hand, and their lamentable injustice to the Zwinglians on the other. He finds time to write from Coburg to the Count of Friesland, earnestly urging him not to tolerate sects—*ne patiatur sectas*—in his territory.† So imperfect a thing is human nature even in the noblest men !

Hoping all things, believing all things, of the Emperor, he is fierce in his repulsion of Rome. On the 25th of June, in a letter to Nicholas Hausmann,‡ he speaks of the Kaiser as seeming to be guarded by a good angel sent from God. Two days later he writes to Melanchthon in terms of positive rebuke, on account of his anxiety to effect reconciliation with the Papists: "If the cause is false, let us recant; if it is true, why do we make Him a liar who tells us to be of easy and slumbering mind—*esse animo otioso et dormienti*—casting our care upon the Lord?" It is on Melanchthon's weakness of faith and rationalistic proclivities that he casts the blame. "It is your philosophy that is the source of your vexation, not your theology." Suppose the worst come to the worst, "What more can the devil do to us than kill us? And what then, *Quid inde?*" There is One that will not die. "Christ died

* De Wette, 1225. † De Wette, 1718. ‡ De Wette, 1233.

once for sin; but for justice and truth He will not die, but lives and reigns." * Two other days having passed, he writes to his friend in a gentler mood, confessing that, brave as are his words, he himself "does not sit among roses." His peremptory dismissal of all proposals for concession to the Pontifical party is again placed side by side with his recognition of a special claim to concession on the part of the Emperor. "I wonder what you want, what you ask for, what and how much you think ought to be conceded to the priest party. As for the Prince,† it is another question what ought to be conceded to him, if danger impends on this side." This is the first hint we have of a dawning perception on Luther's part that the Kaiser, as well as the Pope, may stand in the way of the Gospel.

Towards the end of the letter his tone becomes grandly seer-like, as he chides Melanchthon for seeking to clear up all difficulties in his theology, and to make visible to human eyes the ways and methods of God. "He who attempts, as you do, to render visible, apparent, comprehensible, the unseen things of God, will have cares and tears as the reward of his labour, as you have." "The Lord has announced that He will dwell in clouds, and make darkness His pavilion. Let who will have it otherwise; I shall not. Had Moses

* De Wette, 1234.

† *De Principe est alia quæstio quid illi concedendum sit, si huic periculum impendeat.*—De Wette, 1236. With curious obtuseness—for surely the thing is clear enough—De Wette reads *huic*, suggesting below that Luther meant to write *ei*. But no danger could impend *on* Charles, and Luther writes both what he means and what is good sense, when we read *hinc*, hence, *i.e.*, *from* Charles.

made up his mind to solve the problem of escaping Pharaoh's army, Israel might have been in Egypt at this day."

On the 30th of June we have a perfect cataract of letters, the whole lit up with the splendour of his zeal for the Gospel and his faith in God. Köstlin finely remarks, and the letters of this period abundantly attest, that in surveying from his watch-tower, and directing and animating, the battle for truth and freedom, Luther's own soul became more calm and joyful than before. The spiritual temptations which had vexed him subsided, falling away into peace and silence, like stormy waves or demons in the presence of Christ.

His study of the Bible was perpetual, and he mentions an eminently healthy and practical quality in his Scripture reading: namely, the rejuvenescence of his interest in the Mosaic morality underlying the Christian life. He tells Jonas, with enthusiasm, how he hangs again with boyish delight over the Decalogue. He begins, he says, to be of opinion that "the Decalogue is the logic of the Gospel, and that the Gospel is the rhetoric of the Decalogue. Christ has all that is in Moses, but Moses has not all that is in Christ."* With this practical mood may be associated his interest in the education of the young. He composed in the Coburg fortress, and issued to Germany, a sermon on the duty of sending children to school. As of old, he bathed his spirit in the sacred songs of Israel, especially the 118th Psalm.

* De Wette, 1232.

But it was by faith and prayer, above all, that, amid agitations from Augsburg and tormenting personal maladies, he preserved the heavenly atmosphere of his soul. Veit Dietrich, his companion at Coburg, writing to Melanchthon at the same time when Luther's letters of appeal and encouragement were going forth, gives us a sketch of his habits and demeanour. "I have no words to express my wondering admiration for the surprising steadfastness, the serenity, the faith, the hope, under circumstances so trying, of this man; but he sustains these by diligent and unintermittent converse with the Word of God. No day passes without his spending at least three hours, and these the best hours, in prayer. One time I had the happiness to overhear him pray. Thou good God! what faith was in his words! With such reverence does he beseech God, and with such faith and such hope, that you think he is speaking to a father and a friend. 'I know,' says he, 'that Thou art our God and Father; I am therefore certain that Thou wilt bring the persecutors of Thy children to shame. If Thou dost not so, the danger is Thine as well as ours; for the whole affair is Thine; we entered upon it because we were constrained; therefore wilt Thou defend it.' My heart too burnt mightily within me while, standing afar, I heard him so confidentially, so earnestly, so reverently, speak with God, urging the promises in the Psalms, in the tone of one who was certain that all he prayed for would come to pass."* His prevailing thought at Coburg was that of the whole world lying

* Quoted by Köstlin in his larger work.

in the arms of God, good and evil dominated by His will, physical nature and the heaven of heavens dependent alike on His power. As he looks from the high tower out into the night sky it is of God he thinks. "The great vault of immensity, long flights of clouds sailing through it—dumb, gaunt, huge—who supports all that? 'None ever saw the pillars of it, yet it is supported.' God supports it. We must know that God is great, that God is good; and trust where we cannot see." This, though finely coloured by Carlyle's genius, is a substantially correct translation of a passage occurring in Luther's letter of August 5th to Chancellor Brück. It affords a glimpse into his deepest nature, and shows what a high, reverent, and poetical man he was.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DIET OF AUGSBURG.

"Appearance rules the world," said Schiller, and everyone feels that the words denote a fact; but it is not less true, though it might escape the flashing glance of the poet, that in critical conjunctures of history it is not always the broad and apparent facts of a situation that determine the course of events, but often some essential element which lurks unseen behind superficial appearances. We now, looking from a serener coign of vantage even than that of Luther in Coburg tower, can see that in order to effect a pacification of Christendom, in the sense in which it was sought by Melanchthon and the Protestant Princes and Estates at Augsburg in 1530, nothing less was necessary—inexorably necessary—than that Charles should have ceased to take counsel with Clement, formally or practically deposing him from the Popedom, and should have carried out the Reformation on lines traced by Luther. Had Luther been ambitious, even nobly ambitious, and had healthful ambition been associated in him with gifts of honourable diplomacy, it is not impossible that he might have become Pope. In the then disposition of Europe, it was not impossible that, ascending the Papal

throne, he might have made that grand renunciation of authority over God's Word, and lordship over the Church, which, as a Reformer, he virtually demanded of the Pope. That indeed might have been the salvation of the Papacy. His modesty, however, and his lack of ambition, prevented him from saying to his most trusted adherent, or even whispering to himself in the depths of his heart, that the negotiation ought to be compressed into the question whether Charles would or would not make him, Luther, instead of Pope Clement, ecclesiastical Prime Minister for Europe. But his practical instinct told him that on any other terms reconciliation between Papists and Protestants was an insoluble problem. Melanchthon's unutterable solicitude, therefore, to minimise the differences between the Evangelical position and the Popish was in his eyes hopeless and pitiful. He expressed himself, indeed, in accents of grateful exultation with reference to the fact that, in the Confession of Augsburg, as presented by Melanchthon to the Diet, he and his friends had been honoured of God to set forth the truth clearly, forcibly, and fully. The Confession, he said, was a sermon grander and weightier than any of those which these many years they had been addressing to the Germans. But when Eck and the other Popish champions alleged that they had no great objection to the doctrine of salvation by grace and faith, as stated by the Protestants, he distrusted their sincerity, and (in his correspondence) accused Eck of lying.* And he was vividly conscious

* De Wette, 1289.

that if there *were* agreement in dogma, the claim of Pope and Church to rule over conscience, through authoritative interpretation of Scripture, would bar the way to reconciliation.

This final and fatal divergence is admirably exhibited by Winer, in his book on the Confessions of Christendom. The Protestants and the Romanists alike admitted the supremacy of Scripture. But the Romanists, at every stage of the controversy, maintained that the Pontiff possessed authority to interpret Scripture: *jus interpretandæ sanctæ Scripturæ.* The Lutheran theologians rejected this claim, and laid down this antithesis to the Roman Catholic position: "Sacred Scripture is its own lawful interpreter." The *perspicuity* of sacred Scripture rendered, they held, an exegetico-dogmatic tribunal superfluous.*

The discerning reader will perceive the immense importance of this word *perspicuity,* in characterising the Protestant view. If there was no infallible interpreter of Scripture upon earth—if Christ had committed to no ecclesiastical or civic tribunal the authority to fix the sense of the Bible—then it became practically a necessity to maintain that Scripture was too clear and precise to be liable to honest misunderstanding. Centuries were to elapse; a hundred schools of Protestant theology were to arise; Calvinism, Arminianism, Socinianism, Puritanism, Wesleyanism were each and all to make appeal to Scripture, before the general mind could apprehend how wide are the limits of

* Winer: "Confessions of Christendom."

honest diversity of opinion which it is necessary to recognise as compatible with the perspicuity of Scripture. Luther, and the Augsburg Protestants who had been quickened into spiritual life by his teaching, confidently insisted on the sun-clear perspicuity of God's Word. It was the perspicuity of the Bible that Luther thanked for relief from the distinctions and dubitations of the schoolmen; it would have wrung his heart with intolerable anguish to be forced to admit that even in Scripture there was no such diamond-like clearness as precluded sincere diversity of opinion. Herein we have the key to much that was gravely censurable in his polemical behaviour. To refuse to accept what he believed to be the manifest sense of Scripture was for him a wilful moral offence. Papists were devils who stubbornly shut their eyes to the blaze of heaven's light on the Bible page. The Zwinglians were perverse heretics. He told them with a steel-hard, steel-cold repulsiveness, which brought tears into their eyes, that they were of a different spirit from that of himself and his friends. He looked with impatient half-approval upon commentaries and theological treatises, even when on the right side, as if they encroached upon the province of Scripture, and countenanced the diabolical pretension that the Scripture trumpet could give an uncertain sound.

The silence of universal acquiescence in Bible truth was, of course, an impossible dream of Luther's. Fretting and chafing while he wrote, he himself produced enough theological literature for the reading of half a lifetime. And his followers, while fired with

his zeal for the supreme authority of Scripture, found also—as he found—that it was practically impossible to abstain from theological discussion. Augsburg in the summer of 1530 swarmed with princes who were experts in theological science, adepts in theological debate. John the Steadfast, head of the Protestant interest, had his retinue of professional theologians, and Duke George, chief of the anti-Lutheran party, was encircled by Eck, Cochlæus, and other champions of the old order. The fervency of enthusiasm with which the Protestants watched the labours of Melanchthon, and gloried in the Confession in which he embodied their testimony to freedom and to truth, can be but faintly imagined by the present generation.

The Diet of Augsburg was opened on the 20th of June, 1530, and on the 25th of the month the Saxon Chancellor, Brück, read to the assemblage, in German, the Protestant Confession, which was then, in Latin and German, handed to the Emperor. Some violent Popish prelates suggested that it should be treated as an acknowledgment of heretical and seditious criminality, and answered with the sword; but the general impression produced by its promulgation was very different. Its moderation of tone, and its patent accordance with the central body of Catholic doctrine, drew from some of the princes an avowal that they had hitherto misjudged the Protestants, and that they found nothing in the Confession precluding the attainment of a firm basis of union.* Charles, however, did not

* Hase.

commit himself to an acceptance of the Confession, but called upon the leading theologians of the Papal party, Eck, Cochlæus, Faber, and Wimpina, to draw up a counter-statement. On the 2nd of August this was read to the Diet, and "its pitiful weakness, *Kläglichkeit*," says Hase, "raised the courage of the Protestants." With infinite patience, infinite pains, rebuked by Luther, though he knew the nobleness of his motives, Melanchthon strove to heal the wound of Christendom. There was naming of larger committees, of smaller committees; conference succeeded conference; manifestoes and counter-manifestoes, apologies and counter-apologies, hurtled in the air. Luther saw that no calm could issue out of such a conflict of the winds, and took occasion to accentuate his antagonism to the Papacy by sending out from his Coburg tower treatises on Purgatory and the Keys of the Church. Philip of Hesse, profoundly desirous of union where there was true enthusiasm for freedom and the Word—heartily advocating a league of brotherhood with Zwingli and his brave associates—speedily discerned the hopelessness of Melanchthon's enterprise, and decided to withdraw his countenance from projects of conciliation which could be effected only by sacrificing, under more or less of disguise, the essentials of spiritual freedom. On the 6th of August he withdrew from the Diet and the town. Luther's general sympathy with Philip was severely qualified: first, by Philip's leaning to the Zwinglians, secondly, by the fiery promptitude with which he struck at injustice with the sword; but on

the point of unequivocal and uncompromising rejection of the Papal authority Luther and Philip shook hands.

By the 21st of August Melanchthon and the Popish controversialists had brought the work of accommodation so far that agreement seemed possible on the chief doctrinal positions of the Protestant Confession. But a multitude of practical questions, such as the participation of the sacrament by the laity in both kinds, the sanction of private masses, the enforcement of celibacy on the priesthood, the permission of monastic vows, and the acceptance of the jurisdiction of bishops—not to mention that of the chief of bishops—remained. For light and leading in conducting the negotiation on these points, the Elector of Saxony addressed himself to Luther, and in a letter of the 26th of August * Luther replied. His counsel amounts to a comprehensive refusal to retreat from the position taken up by the Protestants. He had previously † laid down the principle that no innovation is to be introduced into Divine worship without Scriptural warrant: *Cultus Dei novus sine Verbo non est erigendus.* He now applies this principle to the refusal to grant the cup to laymen, and similar matters. The administration of the sacrament in one kind has, he says, no shadow of Scriptural authority. The administration in both kinds is "appointed in bright, clear words of God: *mit hellen klaren Worten Gottes bestätiget.*" He will not admit that what Scripture thus determines can be lawfully treated as

* De Wette, 1287. † De Wette, 1268.

indifferent. And with what grace, he asks, can the Papists now speak of the point as indifferent—they who have persecuted, have driven into exile, have branded and burnt as heretics, men who partook of the sacrament in the Scriptural manner? Of private masses he has to say the same thing. They are human devices. Admit one human device—teach, in one instance, as a Divine doctrine, what is but a commandment of men—and you are logically forced to admit any number. He claims no right, on the part of the Protestants, to forbid Papists to indulge in private masses, but he asserts their right to withhold all approval from the practice. As for the mere externals and mechanical accompaniments of worship—ceremonies, costumes, gestures, fasts and festivals—they are indeed indifferent, and may be lawfully fixed by the secular authorities. They may indeed be safely left to common sense, with which the Bible is not likely to fall out. But Luther adds a curiously roundabout and metaphysical-looking reason, formally derived from Scripture, for handing over these externals to the civil power. They are, he says, an earthly affair: *ein irdisches Ding*. "And all this kind of thing has been placed under the rule of reason through that word, Have dominion over the earth. Seeing, then, that secular government is the highest work of reason, the civil magistrate can do and direct in this province." It is not often that our Doctor is so far-fetched in his citation of Biblical authority.

On the same day on which he wrote this letter to John the Steadfast he wrote also to Spalatin, to

Melanchthon, and to Jonas. To each and all of them his impassioned cry is to abandon the palpably hopeless task of conciliation. He tells Spalatin that he hears it was without much heart or hope in the business (*non libenter*) that he, Spalatin, had entered on the task of making friends of the Pope and Luther. Neither the Pope nor Luther want anything of the kind; and if Spalatin brings his work to perfection, he, Luther, will undertake a conciliatory arrangement between Christ and Belial. To Melanchthon he is almost savage in his sarcastic bluntness. "As if we could cast down the Pope! Or as if, unless the Papacy were laid in the dust, we could safeguard our doctrine!" "You write that Eck has been forced by you to confess that we are justified by faith: would you be good enough to prevail on him not to tell lies?" In the letter to Jonas he is as fierce against Campeggio, the distinguished Cardinal who has of late been doing the high diplomatic work of the Pope in Augsburg, as in the letter to Melanchthon he is against Eck. Campeggio is "a great and distinguished devil: *magnus et insignis diabolus.*" His fierceness reaches a climax, both of intensity and of coarseness, when, in a letter to Spalatin, without date, but written probably within the few remaining days of the month, he avows that if the Augsburg theologians allow the Gospel eagle to be mewed up in a Papal cage, he, Luther, will come in person to set it free; and when, with reference to a proposal that the Protestants should petition the Pope and Campeggio to say what they will please to grant, he implores Spalatin to put in its stead

a proposal, addressed to those high personages, of a kind which the biographer of Luther can neither ignore nor quote.* It is fair to add that he asks Spalatin to excuse his "levity," on the ground that it is wrung from him by fury.

Under these circumstances it was a pleasant incident for him when Prince John Frederick, son of the Elector, accompanied by Count Albert of Mansfeld, on their return from Augsburg, looked suddenly and unexpectedly in upon him at Coburg. Writing to Melanchthon next day, the 15th of September, he says he was glad to see them escaped from the crowd, and expresses the hope that the rest of the would-be peacemakers may soon follow. He mentions that the Prince has presented him with a gold ring. On putting it on, however, he found that, "as if to show that he was not born for wearing gold," it slipped from his finger to the ground.

The departure of the Elector from Augsburg, by permission of the Emperor, on the 23rd of September, excited his liveliest satisfaction, being accepted by him as a proof that no attempt would be made to detain the Protestants in the town until they came to terms with the Pope. Now, he thought, they will all return, and give up the hopeless business. With characteristic stubbornness of adhesion to ideas once formed, he continued at this juncture to think well of the Emperor. "Charles our Kaiser is a most excellent man, and hopes that he will make concord and peace."

* De Wette, 1294.

But so many demons lay siege to him—*obsessus tot monstris dæmonum*—that Luther knows not whether he will succeed. The credit of a sincere desire for conciliation was unquestionably due to Charles; but we cannot praise Luther for being incapable of imputing to the Pope and his legate any motives but those of tyrants and devils.* On the day of the Emperor's departure from Augsburg he announces to Katie that she will soon have him back again. He was nothing daunted when the news of the Elector's leaving Augsburg was followed by that of the promulgation of a decree of the Diet, in which the proposals of the Protestants were decisively rejected, and a general command issued that there should be a falling back on the old Roman lines. In tones of great solemnity, faith, and fortitude, he addresses the Elector, assuring him that the doctrine was not man's, but God's—that God had begun and carried on the work—and that it was safe in His hands.†

This letter to John the Steadfast was penned on the 3rd of October. On the following day he wrote what seems to have been his very last letter from Coburg, one, namely, to Ludwig Senfel, chief musician to the Dukes of Bavaria, in which he requests Senfel to send him a copy of his composition, "I will both lay me down in peace," from the Fourth Psalm, and at the same time expresses his enthusiastic delight in music. The Dukes of Bavaria were prominent in the Popish party, and their chief musician was presumably of their mind. But Luther says frankly that any misgivings he might

* De Wette, 1308. † De Wette, 1316.

have entertained as to the reception his letter would on this account meet with had been over-ruled by his confidence in the genial nature of music. "The love of music, with which I saw you to be gifted and adorned, conquered this fear." The Dukes of Bavaria have been unpropitious to him, but he will vehemently extol their practice of cherishing and honouring music. "Nor," he proceeds, "is it doubtful to me that there are many seeds of virtue in those minds which are affected by music, while those who are insensible to its influence I look upon as most like to stocks and stones." Does not this remind us pleasantly of those familiar lines?—

> "The man that hath no music in himself,
> Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils."

On the 18th of October we find him dating from Wittenberg.

And Clement went on his own way, scared by the spectre of a General Council which he dared not face, and from which the Emperor refused to relieve him—scared and daunted, but not driven to despair, and always putting his trust in that "ambiguous, super-subtle policy" * which was his bane. He had splendid successes; allied himself by family ties both with the Emperor and with Francis; but, on the whole, failed utterly. The Reformation surged on in ever-widening billows, the closing years of his popedom being marked by the advance of the deluge over Wurtemburg, Brandenburgh, Denmark, and Pomerania. When a

* *Zweideutige allzufeine Politik.*—Von Ranke.

prisoner in Charles's hands he had held out, as we saw, hopes to Henry VIII. in the matter of his divorce, but this only added to the fierce resentment of Henry when another turn of fortune's wheel made Clement believe it to be his interest to disappoint him. In spite, therefore, of his subtlety, in spite of his accomplished lying, England was rent by its monarch from the Papal allegiance. "The most unfortunate Pope," Ranke calls Clement, "that ever sat upon the Roman chair." Say rather that he was the Pope who exercised perhaps more unscrupulously than any predecessor or any successor the Papal claim to release men from their oaths and promises.

# Book XV.

## THE END.

1534—1546.

# Book XV.

# THE END.

## CHAPTER I.

### CONTARENI'S MISSION.

The elevation of Cardinal Farnese, Paul III., to the Papal throne is a turning-point in modern history. The mediæval Papacy died with Clement; and when this has been said the reader is prepared for the addition that Martin Luther's work was done. The Babylon he assailed was the Babylon of Alexander VI. and of Julius II., of Leo X. and of Clement VII. The Roman power, as represented by these men, was what he called Antichrist. He was not an old man when Clement died, and he had more than ten years of life before him, but his whole scheme and habit of thought were fixed; and never did the conception of a Papacy different from that of Leo and Clement pass the gates of his mind. Therefore, it is possible to give account of all that the last section of Luther's life contributed to world-history within extremely narrow bounds.

The change which took place in the Papacy after the time of Clement was twofold. In the first place, the character of the institution, as represented by the Popes,

was altered. "To the debauchees, the poisoners, the atheists, who had worn the tiara" in that Papacy against which Luther fought "had succeeded," says Macaulay, with but slight exaggeration, "Popes who, in religious fervour and severe sanctity of manners, might bear a comparison with Cyprian or Ambrose." Of Paul III. it cannot be said, as it can of Paul IV., that he wore day and night, "under his gorgeous vestments, the hair shirt of a simple friar," or that he found, "even in the midst of his most pressing avocations, time for private prayer;" but it is no more than the truth that he was a sincerely religious man, and that he was bent not more upon extending the renown or augmenting the prowess of the Papacy than upon reforming it from within. Assuredly, however, the Popes of the Catholic Restoration did not modify their claim to a Divinely-appointed supremacy in the Church and a lordship over conscience. But the Church of Paul III. had this second difference from the Church of Leo or of Clement: that it contained, not here and there in monks' cells and humble parsonages, but in the high places of the Church, in the *entourage* of the Pope, men who in their heart of hearts set more store by the Word of God even than by the authority of the Popes, and were prepared to accept a scheme of reconciliation between the two sections of divided Christendom of which the principle—the indispensable pre-requisite—should be, not the Divine right of the Papacy, but the clear enunciation and acceptance of Gospel truth. The most conspicuous representative of this Evangelical party in the

heart of the Papacy was Cardinal Contareni. But Luther, though one might have expected him to find his natural allies in those men, made no sign to them, evinced no sympathy with them.

When the Elector of Saxony, asked by the new Pope to co-operate in bringing together a Council to discuss the grand problems of reconciliation and reform, applied to Luther for advice in August, 1535, the reply was a confession of scepticism as to the *bona fides* of the Pontiff. "It is my prayer and my wish," he said, "that they should honestly take in hand a free and Christian Council." * But like Thomas, he would believe only after he had ocular and tangible proof. "God could touch their hearts:" he believed that, but no more. Accordingly, when, in the autumn of the same year, Vergerius, the Pope's legate, made his appearance in Wittenberg, and invited Luther to friendly conference, he declined to treat the matter seriously. There was no formal interview or regular discussion, but Vergerius and he met at breakfast, and we may fairly infer, from a letter of his to Justus Jonas, written a few days after, that his demeanour to the legate was calculated to justify the latter in saying that Luther had treated him rudely. *Legatum egi verbis verdriesslicissimis,*† writes Luther, extemporising a Latin barbarism to indicate that he had twitted and teased the legate to his heart's content. And yet, Mr. Worsley tells us, Vergerius "subsequently became a Lutheran." The probability, therefore, seems great

* De Wette, 1655. † De Wette, 1680.

that he was one of those Papists who at this time profoundly sympathised with Luther.

But it was in 1541, at the Diet of Ratisbon, otherwise called Regensburg, that the most elaborate and earnest effort was made by the friends of union on both sides to avert the final disruption of Christendom. Paul III. chose for his representative Cardinal Contareni: a fact which, to put it at the lowest, proves him to have desired amity with Luther as much as could be reasonably expected of a Pope. For we cannot believe that Paul, who had himself offered the Cardinal's hat to Contareni, was in the dark as to the Evangelical cast of his theology. Contareni believed in salvation by faith only, as sincerely as Luther. The Emperor Charles, though he no doubt wished for political support from the Protestants, was not without higher motives, and desired, with about as much ardour as his nature made him capable of desiring anything, to see harmony and unity of faith restored throughout his dominions. Gropper and Pflug, men of known moderation, were put forward by him to conduct the case on the Popish side; and though Eck, the veteran champion, could not be excluded from the lists, his influence was not great. The Protestant theologians were the invincibly hopeful and lucid Melanchthon and the patient, persuasive Bucer.

Contareni took the lead, and did so with signal and surprising boldness. His instructions were to secure, in the first place, that the primacy of the Pope should pass unchallenged. But he took the liberty to ignore his

instructions, and to propose that the question of agreement in the essentials of doctrinal truth should be taken first. Morone, Bishop of Modena, Tomaso, master of the sacred palace, both of whom agreed with him in his views on justification, supported him. The result might well send a thrill of intensest gratitude and joyful hope to all hearts that yearned for peace in Christendom. On the nature of man, on original sin, on redemption, and even upon justification, it was found that Papists and Protestants could agree. Contareni declared for justification by faith alone—not, indeed, an unproductive, dead faith, but a faith that produced good works. Melanchthon was content. Bucer exultantly proclaimed that the agreement covered everything required for the living of a blessed, righteous, and holy life before God and the congregation. On the Popish side there was equal satisfaction. The Bishop of Aquila professed his belief that the reconciliation of Christendom was at hand. Cardinal Pole wrote to Contareni that the news had filled him with deeper joy than he had ever experienced from a strain of sweetest music, adding that the articles of agreement formed the basis of the whole Christian faith.

"What had been resolved upon at Regensburg," says Ranke, whose account of Contareni's mission is one of the finest passages in his most celebrated book, "required ratification, on the one side from the Pope, on the other from Luther." Paul III. hesitated—perhaps the word is too weak—to sanction Contareni's sublime audacity in reversing his, Paul's order, and putting

the claim of God first, the claim of the Pope second. But there were influences on Contareni's side so mighty —his view of salvation by faith alone had a hold on so many in the Imperial Court, possibly even upon Charles—that if there had been unanimity among the Protestants the Pope himself might have failed to stem the tide of Evangelical reform, surging, amid the acclamations of Christian mankind, over the battlements of Rome.

We turn, therefore, to Luther. A special embassage was despatched to him, consisting of the Princes John and George of Anhalt, with two others. They told him of the agreement of the parties in the Diet on the four points which have been mentioned—an agreement which, if confirmed by him and universally accepted, would, it was believed, render it a comparatively easy matter to form an arrangement on questions of minor importance. Luther's reply of the 12th of June, 1541,* marks a supreme moment in his history and in that of the modern world. He refuses to ratify the agreement. On the question of questions—that of justification by faith—the formula accepted by the Diet cannot, he says, be approved. It is rather—this is, in effect, his position†—a joining together of two definitions which, apart from explanation, do not form a unity, than a single and sound definition. The truth stands clearly and completely stated in the Third of Romans. "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." This, he says, was not

* De Wette, 1994.

† Compare with the above letter that to the Elector John.—De Wette, 1987.

enough for the Popish party, and therefore they added, from the Fifth chapter of Galatians, the words, "faith that worketh by love." These words, he contends, are not to the purpose; or rather, they would, in this connection, be understood to imply that faith justifies by love: that is to say, by the sanctified affections and meritorious works of those in a state of grace, not wholly and solely by the merits of Christ. Since theology has become in England, for all but a few experts, a lost science, it would be useless to enlarge on the stupendous consequences which Martin Luther deduced from what will now to the great body of readers seem an almost unintelligible divergence of opinion. Suffice it to say that, by turning the eye of the believer upon what was wrought *in* him, as the ground of his salvation, and not insisting on its being fixed upon what Christ did *for* him, the Popish view opened the way once more, according to Luther, to all the evils of self-wrought salvation, to monkish introspection, infinite worry about one's frames and affections, with enhancement of the value of sacerdotal assistance. But the express form in which Luther put his objection was to say that, by artificially linking together two passages of Scripture, both true, the reconcilers practically neutralised both, in so far as definition of doctrine was concerned, and produced, not a true definition, but a composite statement, which might give both parties the right to hold their own opinion.* Elaborate semblance

* *Zuletst haben sie beide Notel zusamen gereimet und gekeimet: daraus ist diesse weitläuftige geflickte Notel komen, darin sie Recht, und wir auch Recht haben.*—De Wette, 1987.

of union, like this, was for him a sham, and his fierce wrath was awakened by it. He thought of Prince-Archbishop Albert and his life-long see-sawing between Pope and Gospel; of Henry VIII., with his wish to have, like Antiochus, a religion of his own; and pronounced the work over which there had been such melodious gratulation at Regensburg sheer falsehood, mere "English" show and shine—*eitel Falsch, und leicht englischer Schein.* Glowing in his anger as he thought of the Emperor, from whom he seems to have expected a decidedly Evangelical course, he told Melanchthon * that he had given up hope in that quarter. "There has been enough praying for the Kaiser. If he will not have blessing, let him bear the curse." Pope and Kaiser alike have to settle with God before they give peace to Christendom. "To put it in plain German words, they have first to make their own peace with God, openly confessing what kind of business they have made of it in the past: the Pope leading souls, in their myriads, to destruction for six hundred years, the Kaiser, in these last twenty, burning, drowning, murdering pious people, or letting it be done through his edicts." † But amid Luther's fury—the word is his own—the intellectual self-possession and the inextinguishable practicality of the man survived; and he earnestly counselled that, though complete agreement was impossible, yet upon those four points on which, with reciprocal explanations, the two parties had come to an understanding, there should on both sides be zealous preaching.

* De Wette, 1995. † De Wette, 2000.

And thus the last and most promising of the schemes for the reunion of Christendom vanished like a beautiful dream. They must be coarse and common natures that do not feel the pathos of this fact; but if a real union, a concord potent enough to blend all discords in resultant harmony, was in very truth not attainable, then the man who clearly discerned and frankly accepted the situation was a greater man than those who saw it through the golden and roseate haze of devout illusion.

## CHAPTER II.

### PHILIP OF HESSE'S TWO WIVES.

A FEW words are inexorably required, and very few words will happily suffice, for the treatment of a subject which interests the wise world more than theology: the double marriage, to wit, of Philip of Hesse, and the connection of Luther and Melanchthon therewith. Readers may remember that Luther, before the date of the Peasants' War, had made up his mind that no absolute injunction of monogamy can be produced from Scripture. Monogamy he recognised as the normal state; but under peculiar circumstances the patriarchs had been allowed a multiplicity of wives; and no word in the New Testament announced that, under whatever stress of necessity, the liberty conceded to patriarchs to have more than one wife was sin for Christians. Luther and Melanchthon refused to sanction Henry VIII. when he proposed to divorce his wife because she had been his brother's widow; but they let him know—a similar hint had reached him from the Pope *—that he might solve his problem by taking a second wife. Among Luther's avocations as pastor, one that constantly emerged was the giving of

* Köstlin.

advice in cases of ill-adjusted marriage; and some of his letters, unfitted for reproduction in an English dress, bring the fact graphically before us. It was, therefore, natural that Philip of Hesse, when he wanted advice respecting womankind, should send his friend and theologian, Bucer, to consult Luther on the subject.

Philip was one of the noblest men of his time. He sprang at once, with native intrepidity and the instinct of a high soul for the true and the right, to the side of Luther when the ban of the Empire was pronounced against him at Worms. He had then been a mere stripling; he was now in the noontide of his years; and his life had been a succession of struggles in good causes. Wrong and injustice he could not see without attempting redress, and his restoration of the expelled Duke of Wurtemburg to his duchy was as splendid a bit of work as adorns the annals of chivalry. Keen, bright, and brave of spirit, Philip was portly also and stout in person, and when he rode his great battle-charger was a sight for the eye of an Emperor.*

Like King David of Israel in quick and impassioned response to generous impulses, Philip resembled the son of Jesse also in this: that to him might with three-fold or tenfold emphasis be applied the divine canon of Eden, that it is not good for man to be without woman. With the thoughtless impetuosity of a youth of nineteen, he had hurried into matrimony, to find that he was ill-matched. His wife, indeed, bore him children,

* *Mit Bewunderung und Vergnügen sah ihn der Kaiser auf seinem prächtigen Hengst, kräftig wie der.*—Ranke.

but her person was repulsive to him, and she developed an afflictive propensity to the bottle. And here, if we dared to do justice to Philip at all hazards, it would be incumbent on us to give patient audience to physiological science; but English refinement is too tyrannous in the delicacy of its sensibilities to allow us to put physiology into the witness-box on his behalf. *Verbum sat.* Philip was a sincerely religious man, but his religion failed to guard him on his vulnerable side. He bowed down in the temple of Rimmon. In one word, though tormented by conscience, he lived in unfaithfulness to his wife. Such had been the state of things for many years when he saw Margaret von der Saal, one of the ladies-in-waiting to his sister, and became on the instant supremely enamoured of her. The vision of a purer and, in the best sense, a happier life rose upon him. His wife was such to him only in name; his vagrant profligacies were but a mitigation of misery, with added sting of sin; in Margaret, if she were but joined to him in a bond sacredly distinguished from that of free-love, or even of selectest concubinage, he would at last possess the essential blessedness of a wife. His own Christine—honest woman—cheered by the friendly bottle, scrupled not to signify in black and white that she did not object to the arrangement. All this and much more the persuasive Bucer rounded into the ears of Luther and Melanchthon when he asked them to pronounce an opinion on Philip's affair. It was late in the autumn of 1539.

Luther and Melanchthon made a statement to the

effect that marriage, in its normal, divinely appointed shape, was the union of one man with one woman. But in individual cases, and under stress of necessity, the taking of more than one wife had been permitted in the Old Testament, and was not forbidden in the New. It would be better for Philip to take a second wife than to live in random profligacy. Since, however, the propriety of the arrangement depended on grounds personal to Philip, the marriage ought to be secret, and the fact of its having taken place ought to be concealed.

On the theology of this decision no opinion need be offered. It is at least indisputable that Popes have granted similar dispensations. But the secrecy of the transaction sticks more deeply in the modern imagination; and the reader, therefore, unless he will do cruel injustice to Luther, is bound to attend to the ground on which the frank Doctor defended the concealment practised in the affair. Be it clearly understood that Luther's case was not that of one who did a sly thing and was ashamed of it, and tried to hide it. The secrecy was, in his view, an integral part of the business. He was dealing with a case of the personal conscience, and, unless the application of his judgment were confined to the personal conscience—unless, that is to say, it were prevented from becoming a precedent for general observance—the rightness of it would be vitiated. The *necessity* of one would, in that event, become *law* for all —a result to be deprecated. In the exquisite precision with which Luther draws the distinctions fitted to the occasion, evidence may be found that if old

John Luther had had his way, his son might have made a famous jurist. "It does not hold," he says, "that what you do from necessity I may do of right. A man steals to avoid starvation, a man smites his neighbour dead in self-defence. Neither is punished; and yet theft and murder are punishable. Necessity over-rides right and precedent, but it constitutes no right or precedent. *Necessitas frangit legem, sed non facit legem:* necessity breaks all laws, but makes none."* Therefore, if you will avert the frightful peril involved in converting necessity into rule, you are bound by duty, reason, and common sense to seclude the individual case from the general gaze.

This is strong thinking as well as fine. Luther could say, in relation to Philip's concern as well as to the other incidents of his career, "I am not one who simulates or dissimulates." He was deeply annoyed, it is true, at the idea, correctly or incorrectly entertained, that Philip had not been perfectly open and ingenuous with him; but I am not aware that he ever expressed contrition for his own conduct. The affair almost broke the heart, almost ended the life, of Melanchthon. But while Melanchthon lay moaning at death's door, Luther exhorted him—nay, commanded him—to be of good courage, and prayed for his life in his sick chamber so earnestly, rubbing God's ears, as he said, with His own promises, that the dying man awoke, and there ensued such a marvel of restoration that Luther himself spoke of it as miraculous.

* De Wette, 2516.

## CHAPTER III.

### MAGDALENE'S DEATH AND LUTHER'S.

We saw that Luther, who had for all tender and helpless creatures the warm affection that has often characterised men of iron build, was melted to a passion of grief that surprised himself by its intensity when his daughter Elizabeth, not yet a year old, was taken from him. He then first felt, not without a sense of wonder, how terrible is the hold that nature gives to a child on the heart of its parent. But the place of Elizabeth had been filled, in May, 1529, by Magdalene, and all the love that had yearned for the first daughter encircled the second. She passed the years of childhood, was mentioned in words of praise by Melanchthon, and now, a gentle, sweet, universally beloved girl of thirteen, was dear to her father, who said she had never once angered him, as the apple of his eye. She and Johnny had played together as brother and "little sister"—George Eliot has helped us to realise what that means. Whether the parting from Johnny, who was sent to school at Torgau, and his continued absence, preyed upon her mind, we are not informed, but she fell ill, and in September, 1542, it was evident that her end drew near. She longed intensely to see her brother. Luther

sent off a carriage to Torgau to bring him, not forgetting to caution the master, Marcus Crodel, against startling the boy by telling him the cause of the sudden summons. "They loved each other much," he said. Johnny came, and we may believe that some brightening or abatement of symptoms took place in consequence, for Luther, when he sent the carriage, had manifestly thought she might not live to see her brother, and yet she survived his arrival eleven days. She was old enough, and self-possessed enough, to have a perfect idea of her situation; and when, at the last, Luther said to her, "My own Magdalene, you are willing, are you not, to remain with your father here, or to go to your heavenly Father?" she calmly replied, "Yes, dear, dear father, whichever God wills." She fell asleep in his arms, and he knew that he was putting a saint into the arms of Christ; but the conflict between his two reigning passions, submission to God and love for his children, shook his nature to its foundations, and prayer could not staunch his burning tears. In a letter to Justus Jonas he used words, descriptive of his own and Katie's distress, which have seldom been equalled, and certainly never surpassed, in the intensity of their expressiveness. His dearest Magdalene, he says, has been re-born into Christ's eternal kingdom, and he and her mother ought to rejoice that, by a happy passage and a blissful end, she had escaped all danger and all sorrow; "and yet, such is the force of natural affection, that without sobbing and groaning of heart, nay, without killing and mighty anguish (*sine grandi necrosi*), we cannot do it. Indelibly

engraven in the depths of our hearts are the face, the words, the gestures, as she lived and as she died, of the most obedient and most reverent of daughters, so that not even the death of Christ—in comparison of which, what are all other deaths?—can turn our thoughts, as it ought, into another channel."

He had himself been for many years a sufferer from painful and depressing maladies. The giddiness, the ringing in the ears, the racking headaches, which tormented him during his residence in Coburg, returned at intervals, and other not less afflictive disorders made him their victim. His incessant labour of brain, with perpetual strain on the emotions, could not but draw heavily on the stores of life. At one time he underwent agonies from a suppuration of the ear, which had a good effect in ridding the head of malignant humours, but left the hearing impaired. At another he complained of failing eyesight. There were symptoms of a distressing kind in throat and chest, and occasionally he was agonised by the stone. But all these pains, though they quickened in him what had long been his settled wish, to enter the heavenly kingdom, never extorted from him one complaint against the dispensations of Providence, one hard or faithless thought of God. Psychology, no doubt, in its rigorously scientific mood, will admit that profoundly unconscious as he was of the fact, his indignation against Pope, Turk, Jew, and Sectary, which burned like a furnace in his closing years, was due in part to fevered pulse and tortured nerve. The glow of passionate fury always relieved him—no man ever

knew the *gaudia certaminis* better than he—and he says that even in the paroxysm of his distress at the bedside of Magdalene he was sensible of a drop of mitigation in the fierceness of his anger against death. The Pope, in those years, served frequently as a block into which, like Maggie Tulliver with her fetish, he drove another nail when the twinges of physical anguish became intolerably severe.

But neither ceaseless toil nor bodily pain could quench the spirit or depress the buoyancy of Luther, or dry up the fountains of joy in his soul, or turn his sunny and genial humour into acrid spleen or sullen silence. He could appreciate the good gifts of God that were left him, rejoice in his wife and children, and cherish as priceless treasures his friends. Three boys, John, Martin, and Paul, and one daughter, Margaret, grew up around him. A genuine bit of nature in all things, he admitted that he felt himself drawn by a special affection to the younger children—the *little* ones—as they appeared. Paul, the youngest, was in some sense a second Johnny, and derived additional interest in his father's eyes from having been called by him after that Apostle whom, of created beings, he valued highest. All his sons he wished to be experts in theology, but Paul, he fondly hoped or dreamed, would be a fighter not in the windy arena of controversy, but in actual steel battle, defending Europe against the Turks. John and Martin were common-place men; Paul rose to eminence as a physician; but on all of them the guidance of their father, conscientiously firm yet gentler, deliberately

so, than his own had been, and accompanied by his example of sincere and undefiled religion, told favourably. That moral radiance which was a halo for Luther from his youth attended them all; and Herr Köstlin observes that not even a Jesuit has sullied with one aspersion the whiteness of their fame.

Elector Frederick had checked Luther considerably. Elector John checked him a little. Elector John Frederick, who succeeded his father in 1532, and survived Luther, checked him not at all, but regarded him with fervent enthusiasm, and bid him share all he had. Yet there was no abjectness in John Frederick's admiration, and he took a much severer view of Philip of Hesse's double marriage than Melanchthon and Luther. In one word, Luther was on terms of perfect amity and concord with his sovereign prince. As the world measures riches, he was still a poor man. Katie said he might have been rich if he had been like other people; but he knew that the coin of Crœsus could not have made him an atom richer in the means of true enjoyment. His nominal yearly income was never more than about four hundred florins, but he got many presents, and on all occasions when special demands were made on his hospitality, a hint procured him venison or wild boar from his high friends. He was able to surround himself with some garden ground in Wittenberg, and for the last fifteen years of his life he was the possessor of Zuhlsdorf, a small farm which a brother of Katie, who had fallen into reduced circumstances, sold to him for six hundred and ten

florins.* Whether the place was worth the money has been doubted, but it was the delight of Katie, the most enthusiastic and energetic of managers, who made business a pleasure amid her cattle, pigs, horses, poultry, bee-hives, and fish-ponds.

In the end of 1545 Luther was applied to by the Counts of Mansfeld—two brothers who had fallen out—to lend them his aid for the restoration of peace and goodwill between them. A family quarrel had arisen, money being the apple of discord; and in no man did the disputants repose such trust, as sure to judge wisely and decide justly between them, as in Luther. For him such a request brought with it a sacred obligation; and in the dead of winter, January, 1546, he undertook a journey from Wittenberg to Eisleben, where he was to meet the brothers. On the 25th of the month he had reached Halle, and thence he wrote, in high spirits, to his wife. Between Wittenberg and Halle he had crossed the Mulda, which, so far as appears, was not then in flood; but the Saal rose to stay his onward journey, and the Mulda flooded his backward path. "We entered Halle," he wrote, "to-day at eight o'clock, but have not proceeded to Eisleben. For a huge Anabaptist met us, with billowy waves and great ice-masses, which covered the land, and threatened us with second baptism. Nor could we turn back, on account of the Mulda. We must therefore lie still at Halle, between the waters." After three days' delay he pushed on. The Counts of Mansfeld, with upwards of a hundred horsemen, escorted

* Köstlin.

him into Eisleben. On the 1st of February he writes one letter to Melanchthon, and another to Katie, and in both mentions a notable incident of his journey from Halle to Eisleben. To Katie his tone is jocular. As he sat in the carriage, and was passing a village peopled by Jews, a blast of cold wind—Katie, he thinks, might say it was sent by the Jews or their God—struck upon his head with such intense frigidity that he felt as if his brain had turned to ice. This had probably something to do with a giddiness that followed, but he was now well again. To Melanchthon he is more minutely communicative, and his tone is more grave. He had been walking, he says, and had exerted himself above his strength, so that he had broken into a sweat. On resuming his place in the carriage the sweat grew cold on him, and the chill was so great that the muscles of his left arm were benumbed. There followed "*compressio cordis et quasi suffocatio spiritûs:* a tightness of the chest and, as it were, suffocation of the breath." He speaks of *syncope*—a hint that the giddiness mentioned to Katie was probably a faint. The seizure was obviously most serious, and suggests to an unprofessional eye a premonitory attack of *angina pectoris.*

At first the business of reconciliation which had brought him to Eisleben went prosperously. But new difficulties arose, and Luther experienced bitter vexation, both on account of the covetous spirit betrayed by the disputants, and of the equivocating and hair-splitting of the lawyers. The worry can have had none

other than a bad effect on his health. Cautious as he had been, Katie became alarmed, and he wrote in playful tone, yet with earnest intent, urging her to put her trust in God. "Read your St. John and the little Catechism, of which you once said, 'Everything in this book is said of me.' You will take care for your God, forsooth. As if He were not Almighty, and could not raise up ten Dr. Martins if this old one were drowned in the Saal." "Let me alone with your care, for I have a better guardian than you and all angels. He lies in a manger, He hangs on a virgin's breast; and yet He sits at the right hand of the Almighty Father. Be therefore at rest." On the 14th, he tells her with great joy that he hopes to be at home within the week. Once more, and conclusively, there has been a brightening of the horizon in the matter of the Counts. The brothers are ready to call themselves brothers again. The young people of the families go out sledging together, and make presents to each other. In the gladness of her heart the Countess Albert has presented him with some trout, which he sends on to Katie. That his mind was not so much at rest as to his state of health as might from this letter be inferred is proved by his writing to Melanchthon on the same day, and particularly enjoining him to send a messenger to meet him with the corrosive which he had used to keep open an issue in his leg. That issue had closed. Luther doubtless knew that this was dangerous.

On the 16th and the morning of the 17th the negotiation between the Counts was brought to a satisfactory

conclusion. On the evening of the 17th, pain and oppression on the chest, resembling those of the attack on his journey, suddenly returned. He soon felt that a crisis was approaching. He bethought him that he had been born in Eisleben; "and how should it be," he said, "if I were to die here?" The symptoms, in spite of rubbing with hot towels and the administration of remedies, became rapidly worse. "Oh, my God," he cried, "how agonised I am! Dear Dr. Jonas, I think that here in Eisleben, where I was born and baptised, I shall die." Sweat broke out upon him, and his friends exclaimed that it was a wholesome sign, and he would get better. It was, he said, the cold sweat of death. He prayed aloud with great earnestness, thanking God, in this supreme hour, for having made him an instrument to preach Christ and maintain His cause against the Pope. "Lord Jesus Christ, accept my soul. O heavenly Father, though I must leave this body and be torn from life, yet I know for sure that I shall abide eternally with Thee, and that no one can take me out of Thy hands." Three times he repeated, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, Thou faithful God." His eyes closed, he ceased to speak, consciousness was all but suspended. Then Dr. Jonas and another of the bystanders cried loudly, "Reverend father, do you remain fixed in faith in Christ, and in the doctrine that you have preached?" He distinctly replied, "Yes." Then, turning on his right side, he sank into deepening slumber, and in a quarter of an hour had ceased to breathe. One of his

favourite passages was that in which Christ promises that those who have faith in Him shall not taste death; and those who looked upon Luther's face, when the lips stiffened and the cheeks grew white, bore testimony that in his case death had been a calm glowing and awakening into diviner life, rather than any crisis of severance or distress.

Amid the reverent sorrow of the noble and the rich, and the heartfelt weeping of the poor, they carried the body into Wittenberg, and laid it in a grave under the floor of that church on whose door he had posted the Theses. His friend Melanchthon delivered a funeral oration, in which, without fulsome praise or veiling of defects, he recognised the unique honour pertaining to this man as God's prophet and chariot-driver in the great spiritual revolution that had begun in Germany and the world.* Had the age in which he lived been one of those ages in which sublime and perennial truths of religion dawn in poetry, his career would have furnished forth an Iliad of wonders. For his discernment of occasion was like the glance of supernal power, and the rightness of aim and force of stroke with which, at exactly the right moment, in the right place, in the right way, he delivered his attacks, gave them the effect of miracle. He spoke, and a whole cluster of towers, cresting the walls of Babylon, came crashing down. Such work was dear to his heart; but dearer still was that of kindling a lamp of moral illumination in every parish pulpit in Saxony, of restoring to the pastor his

* Walch, Matthesius, Zimmermann, Köstlin.

wife, of gathering children into schools and putting into their hands simple catechisms, teaching them to obey God their Father, and love Christ their Brother. Mr. Matthew Arnold, a witness whose competence will be acknowledged in all halls of culture, and who is not prejudiced in favour of Protestant dogma, has told us that the work of Luther still lasts in the schools of Germany, and is worthy to be preserved. Defective or not, his character was as sincere as that of any man named in history; and as we reflect on this fact we are almost persuaded to accept Carlyle's position, that every sincere man is a hero. He believed in Christ, and he gave his life to the enterprise of raising men to spiritual and eternal salvation through union with God in Christ.

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